Showing the Way

Methodologies for Successful Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects

United Nations
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Showing the Way: Methodologies for Successful Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects
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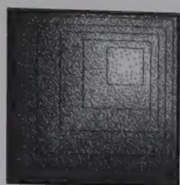
Showing the Way

Methodologies for Successful Rural Poverty Alleviation Projects

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1996

Rural poverty alleviation can be undertaken at different levels: the community level, the project level, the "comprehensive" level and the national level. These will be discussed in Chapter III. However, regardless of the level of implementation, poverty alleviation is dependent on the ability to devise and implement programmes which are consistent with certain principles. These principles, summarized as awareness-raising, participation, sustainability and self-reliance, are discussed in Chapter IV.

Chapter V, comprising the largest part of the publication, discussed the selected poverty alleviation strategies on this background. They are categorized on the basis of the inputs provided by the participants at the above-mentioned Seminar. Four major categories of successful strategies are distinguished: a category related to planning and management, a category related to staff development, a category dealing with local capacity-building, and a category concerned with resource mobilization and generation.

The publication concludes with a brief chapter on poverty alleviation projects in the special context of a conflict situation, and with some annotated references for further reading.

This publication is the first of a series on promoting HRD services for the poor. The second study, *Making an Impact: Successful Poverty Alleviation Case Studies* (Promoting HRD Services for the Poor, No. 2), deals with nine case studies from five different countries. A third volume, *Support or Control? Registration Procedures of NGOs in Asia and the Pacific* (Promoting HRD Services for the Poor, No. 3), discusses the nature and impact of government registration of NGOs dealing with poverty. The objective of this series of publications is to encourage government and NGO personnel in Asia and the Pacific to focus their efforts more effectively on poverty alleviation and enhance the capabilities of those personnel undertaking such work.

This study was prepared for ESCAP by Professor David Cox of the Graduate School of Social Work, La Trobe University, Australia.

Contents

Introduction: Rural Poverty and Its Alleviation

The nature of rural poverty

Any poverty alleviation initiative in Asia and the Pacific needs to be based on a clear and in-depth understanding of the nature of poverty and its significance for people, communities and nations. Because of the inherent difficulties in this work, unless there is an appreciation of its fundamental importance to the well-being of people and therefore of the region, it is unlikely to be persevered at the intensity required. With the basic well-being, and, in many cases, the very lives of at least 800 million people at stake, no challenge is more important today than the challenge of eradicating poverty.

The last few years have witnessed numerous declarations by national and world leaders to eradicate poverty. In 1994 the Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development committed the nations of the region to the eradication of poverty by the year 2010. In 1995 the World Summit on Social Development accepted a commitment to the eradication of poverty at the global level. Those official commitments need to be endorsed by all policy makers and practitioners with their respective spheres of responsibility, so as to constitute a clear objective of the work within each sphere of responsibility.

The definition of rural poverty

Poverty can be defined in several ways. A simple definition relates poverty to a poverty line, so that those in poverty are defined as those individuals, households, communities or other social groups receiving an income below a minimal standard. This definition ignores the non-cash resources available to people, such as the produce of their gardens or the products of their craft skills, and is difficult to use beyond a limited local situation. A second definition uses a consumption-based poverty line. As defined by the World Bank (1990: 26), this is: "The expenditure necessary to buy a minimum standard of nutrition and other basic necessities and a further amount, that varies from country to country, reflecting the cost of participating in the life of society". By implication, a life free from poverty means the ability to obtain sufficient

nutritious food, receive adequate health care, have access to clean water and sanitation, and be a functioning member of society.

It is customary to distinguish between absolute poverty, which we might define as insufficient earnings and assets to permit a minimal nutritious diet and other essential non-food requirements, and relative poverty, where one will survive but will be and will feel poor relative to others around them is with absolute poverty.

It is customary also to distinguish between chronic and acute poverty. Chronic poverty is where absolute poverty is the normal state of affairs; acute poverty is the product of a sudden disaster, which will eventually be rectified. Our concern here is with chronic poverty.

The rural focus

This study will focus, in the first place, on poverty in rural areas, as distinct from urban areas, thus implying that there is a discernible and significant difference between these two types of poverty, related mainly to the context in which the poverty occurs. In rural areas the basis of survival is the land. Residents will in the main either have access to land, thus enabling them to be productive, or will sell their labour to those who do have access to land, or will engage in some combination of the two roles. In time, an area may develop a range of opportunities for providing services to those who work the land, as well as opportunities to market rural produce directly, or to add value to it and then market. Rural poverty tends to be the result, first, of having access to land that will not, using existing methods, sustain life at an adequate level. Second, for those with little or no land, poverty is the result of having no other regular forms of income- generation available.

In urban areas, by contrast, the poor need to meet their everyday needs through the acquisition of goods and services provided by outsiders. This situation gives rise to a substantial informal economy that provides income-generation opportunities, albeit often meager, for a large number of people. Poverty arises from the conditions often prevailing in the informal economy, but it nonetheless represents a means of survival not available to most rural residents.

The differences in the response to poverty which these two distinct contexts of poverty call for is what basically distinguishes rural from urban poverty. Certainly, the face of the two forms of poverty may also vary, but more important is the need to recognize that different responses are required, depending on the context in which the poverty occurs.

The realities of rural poverty

In rural areas, poverty may be most graphically evident in the lack of access to sufficient quantities of food with the requisite nutritional value. It may be reflected in the absence of adequate sanitary measures or of a safe water supply. Quite frequently, it is characterized by lack of access to externally provided health and education services. Finally, even in relatively prosperous rural areas, poverty may be seen in the lack of any freedom to choose one's way of life.

In most rural poverty situations poverty is more likely to be chronic than acute. Hence, the required response called for will tend to be of a structural nature rather than any temporary form of food or other relief. Programmes need to address the structures of the agricultural process, of public health provision, of social service delivery or of the available economic opportunities,

especially marketing and non-agricultural economic activity, together often with improvements in the local infrastructure.

Whilst chronic rural poverty remains widespread in the region, it needs to be acknowledged that social conflicts and warfare are not infrequent complicating factors, resulting in acute poverty which becomes chronic if the fighting continues over a long period, or if the area remains devastated in some significant way as a result of the conflict.

A direct link is also observable between ecological degradation and rural poverty. There are three aspects to this association. First, as the World Bank (1990: 30) points out: "Many of the poor are located in regions where arable land is scarce, agricultural productivity is low, and drought, floods and environmental degradation are common". Second, exploitation of the resources of rural areas - of forests, waterways and coastal waters for example - can and does bring poverty to rural peoples. Third, poverty itself leads to ecological degradation as "short-term needs force landless families to raze plots in the main forest, plough steep slopes, and shorten fallow periods" (Durning, 1990: 145).

It is important, furthermore, to distinguish between three forms of rural poverty in terms of the target group which each presents. The three forms are case, group and area poverty. In some rural areas, the generally prevailing situation may be quite good; however, there may exist a significant number of families in poverty to whom poverty alleviation programmes need to be directed. In other rural situations, it is a clearly distinguished group of people who are experiencing poverty. They may be distinguished economically (e.g. landless labourers), socially (e.g. members of a specific social class), ethnically (i.e. of different ethnic origins to the majority) or geographically (e.g. those with land in more remote or less fertile districts). The third form is area poverty, in which an entire area, with all of its communities, is experiencing poverty as a direct outcome of some characteristics of the area, such as its remoteness or poor climate. The relevance of distinguishing between these three forms is that the poverty alleviation approach will need to be adjusted in response to the presenting form of rural poverty.

Rural poverty alleviation versus eradication

In some quarters today it is common to speak of poverty eradication rather than alleviation. What, then, is the significance of using the term "alleviation"? Basically it is a question of establishing realistic goals. If rural poverty alleviation programmes are able to alleviate significantly the poverty being experienced by the great majority of people in a given area, that is a significant achievement. Moreover, alleviation of the major dimensions of poverty is probably all that a programme of the type here envisaged can achieve, that is the HRD approach to rural poverty alleviation. It is on-going development at the macro level, together with the approach presented here, which will, if it is appropriately directed and implemented, eradicate poverty from a community or society. The sad reality, however, is that relatively few communities or societies have yet achieved that goal, so that poverty has remained a persistent element in most developing and many developed countries.

The dimensions of poverty

In one sense the dimensions of poverty are unimportant. Whether poverty is afflicting 50, or 500, or 5,000 or 5 million people we should want to do something about it. On the other hand, the

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current reality, which is that poverty is afflicting massive numbers of people in our region, renders the task of poverty alleviation of the utmost importance.

The 1995 UNDP <u>Human Development Report</u> suggests that there are 1.3 billion people in poverty world-wide, 70 per cent of whom are women. It is thus not surprising that many today speak of the "feminisation of poverty". This same report states that "South Asia is home to more than 560 million poor people, nearly half the world's poor population", while there are significant numbers still in East and South-East Asia, perhaps 200 million people. While such numbers are frightening, the much smaller numbers of those in poverty elsewhere in the region are no less important. Numbers in the Pacific, for example, are small by comparison with South Asia, but the South Pacific Commission sees poverty as an emerging issue in its subregion.

Fortunately, we have witnessed some significant declines in the dimensions of poverty, especially in East and South-East Asia. It is disturbing, however, that the actual numbers in some countries have increased, and in others remained static, despite significant economic growth. That fact is a major reason why there is now very wide-spread questioning of the ability of economic growth by itself to eradicate, and even sometimes to alleviate significantly, poverty, at least for some sections of a population.

The challenge of rural poverty alleviation

In many developing Asian and Pacific countries, rural poverty is aggravated by high birth-rates, scarce land and the depletion of land as desperate people exploit that resource beyond its endurable limit. In many countries, the incidence of rural poverty is, at the same time, being reduced as the sheer weight of that poverty leads people to migrate to urban areas. While this may ease rural pressures, it is no solution to rural poverty and it is resulting in the rapid increase in urban poverty. Today, the bulk of poverty in Asia remains rural, but by the year 2000, 45 per cent of Asia's poor will be city-dwellers.

The challenge of rural poverty alleviation is to provide rural people with income-generation opportunities which are ecologically sustainable and will permit an acceptable level of well-being for all people. It is anticipated that the achievement of that goal will almost invariably be accompanied by a significant reduction in the birth-rate. Obviously, it will also reduce the pressures on urban areas by bringing about some return migration and rendering future movements more manageable and beneficial to all concerned.

The major challenge that confronts us is, therefore, the all-important question of how to achieve rural poverty alleviation, and that is the question which the balance of this Training Programme sets out to answer.

# Basic Approaches to Rural Poverty Alleviation

II

A. RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH ECONOMIC GROWTH AND MACRO LEVEL CHANGES

Until the last few decades, it was widely held in official circles in the developing Asian and Pacific region that the answer to poverty lay in economic growth, including macro-level change (e.g. structural shifts towards industrialization). Today it is well appreciated that, while the economic growth approach is important, it is not in and of itself an adequate response to poverty. This section explores both the economic growth approach and the alternatives to it which we are drawing together under the human resources development (HRD) approach.

One of the core goals of development has always been the alleviation, if not eradication of poverty. The major issue, however, is how development can achieve this goal. The focus of this study might be seen as a set of "anti-poverty projects", a set of projects which target the poor and have as their express purpose the alleviation of their poverty. Yet the World Bank has concluded: "Attacking poverty is not primarily a task for narrowly focused anti-poverty projects, vital though these may be. It is a task for economic policy in the large" (World Bank, 1990).

This conclusion has been a common one throughout the four decades of development activities. The major goal of development has been economic growth, with the assumption that ultimately all would benefit from that growth, and poverty would become a phenomenon of the past. When the numbers of poor continued to grow, there were those who argued that the time-frame was too short; that it would require considerable time but that ultimately all would benefit from economic development.

Today the assumption that economic growth will ever by itself alleviate poverty is being seriously questioned from all sides. In recent times medium to high levels of economic growth, and growing prosperity generally, have coincided across a whole range of states with increasing inequality (the gap between the rich and the poor in particular but also other divisions) and often growing or at least continuing numbers in poverty.
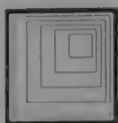
Within the developing countries the situation is epitomized in the following comments by UNDP:

> The world has become a global financial village. During 1965-90, world merchandise trade tripled, and trade in services increased more than fourteen fold. But the poorest 20 per cent of the world's people have benefited little from the increased globalization of economies. In world trade their share is only 1 per cent - and in world commercial lending, a scant 0.2 per cent...the external debt of developing countries in 1993 amounted to more than $1.8 trillion, and their debt service rose to 22 per cent of export earning...More than three-fourths of the world's people live in developing countries, but they enjoy only 16 per cent of the world's income - while the richest 20 per cent have 85 per cent of global income (UNDP *Human Development Report 1995:* 14).

Thus, world economic developments have not greatly assisted the developing countries. To the extent that it has done so, the wealth accruing to developing countries has gone to the wealthiest 20 per cent there and almost not at all to poverty alleviation.

Apart from receiving no share of global income, and carrying at least some of the burden of growing debt and externally-imposed structural adjustment packages, the poor have not even benefited from the obvious advances in health, education and other social services. To again quote from UNDP : "In developing countries, one person in three lives in poverty. Even basic social services - primary health care, basic education, safe drinking water and adequate nutrition - are not available to more than one billion people" (UNDP *Human Development Report 1995:* 15).

Economic growth, and the macro approach to development generally, all too often bypasses, or even exploits, the poor, leaving them unaffected or worse off. Whenever poverty alleviation has been made a goal of this level of development it has more often than not failed to reach the poor, commonly being siphoned off by the upwardly mobile in any situation. This experience has led many to conclude that a radically new approach to rural development is called for - an approach which to Michael Cernea of the World Bank means "putting people first". He has written in the preface to a 1995 World Bank publication:

> The volume takes a firm stand against the technocratic and econocratic biases in development work. It criticizes explicitly or implicitly the neglect of social or cultural dimensions, the rigidity of blueprint thinking in project design, the focus on commodities rather than on the social actor, the disregard for farmers' knowledge, and the indifference towards people's grass roots institutions and organizations (World Bank, 1995).

This entire volume is devoted to demonstrating that "putting people first" is indispensable in rural development - a reversal of the conventional approach. As such it reflects a widespread broadening of the concept of development.

B. RURAL POVERTY ALLEVIATION THROUGH HUMAN RESOURCES DEVELOPMENT

Many terms are used to describe the development approaches which are alternatives to the economic growth approach. UNDP uses the term "human development", which "brings together
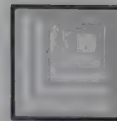
the production and distribution of commodities and the expansion and use of human capabilities" (1995: 12). Korten (1990: 5) uses the term "people-centred development", which "looks to justice, sustainability and inclusiveness as the defining principles of authentic development". For its part, ESCAP uses the term "human resources development," or "HRD" which it defines as follows:

> Human resources development is a continuing and iterative process comprising three interdependent components: (a) *investment* in human resources to enhance productive capabilities; (b) the *utilization* of those human resources to produce increased output; and (c) the participation of the human beings who embody those human resources in the *consumption* of the benefits arising out of that increased output through an enhanced quality of life (ESCAP, 1994: 13).

HRD thus embraces the provision of services, such as nutrition, health and education, as well as the full involvement of people in their own development. HRD is concerned with ensuring that the resources which people - including the poor - represent are fully available to the development process; while ensuring that it is the people, again including the poor, who are the major beneficiaries of development. And precisely these same criteria prevail when the HRD approach is applied to rural poverty alleviation.

Rural poverty alleviation through HRD essentially begins by assisting poor people to become more aware, to build their self-confidence and to appreciate their own potential. This is the foundation of all sustainable development - the development of people's self-esteem. The next steps are to build up the knowledge levels of people, for example through literacy, and to ascertain that proper health, nutritional and housing standards are met. This will open up income-generation opportunities and enhance the quality of life of the poor. These are the foundations of human resources development. As stated by ESCAP (1994a: 14):

> Improvements in nutrition, health and education are key elements of an improved quality of life and thus must be considered important investments in human resources. [...] The financial reward obtained from participation in productive activity (arising from these investments) is the principal means by which individuals are able to participate in the quality-of-life benefits that are created by development.

Another ESCAP study (1995a: 4), argues that, particularly in developing countries with substantial numbers of poor, investments in the availability of more and better food, access to clean water and health care, improved opportunities for education and training, and improvements in housing and sanitation have particularly high economic rates of return over the long term.

However, it has often been argued that in many countries HRD services have not been made available sufficiently to the great majority of the poor, and especially the rural poor. As the World Bank states: "The poor generally lack access to basic social services. There is too little investment in their human capital, and this increases the probability that they and their children will remain poor. To break this vicious circle, governments must make reaching the poor a priority in its own right" (World Bank, 1990: 79).

C. TARGETING THE POOR

Economic growth, combined with efficient provision of HRD services, is thus a necessary condition for reducing poverty. But is it sufficient? The report in 1992 of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation, having reviewed South Asia's average annual growth rate of 3.1 per cent over 10 years, concludes that the past development interventions have been inadequate for poverty alleviation. "Such growth has failed to 'trickle down' or be redistributed to the poor, except in a limited manner" (SAARC, 1992: iv). The report also concludes that

> The eradication of poverty in South Asia would require a major political approach in which participation of the poor plays a critical role (ibid: v).

The report is convinced that a "Poverty Alleviation Plan" which is radically different from past development approaches is called for. The main elements of this new approach are: a GDP growth rate of 9 per cent per annum and mobilization of the poor's human resources; but also an explicit political commitment and a net transfer of resources to the poor (ibid: vii). Similarly, UNDP's *1994 Human Development Report* (1994: 20) discusses the need for additional approaches to poverty alleviation. Some of the successful experiences include agrarian reform, credit for all, employment generation, participation, provision of a social safety net, and sustainability issues. This view is now a widely held one.

All these elements leave us searching for the strategies which will ensure that each and every one of these poverty reduction processes will be applicable and accessible to those who need them most - the poorest of the poor. Therefore, what appears to be needed is a rural poverty alleviation approach directly targeted at the poor, focusing directly on the communities experiencing poverty.

However, a targeted approach can have limited impact unless it is complemented by two other approaches to development. One is the development of a macro-economic system and environment which provides to all a range of employment and income-generation options. The second approach is the provision of HRD services, particularly through education and health services, but also other services, all provided in a manner that reflect a deliberate decision to invest in the development of all people, particularly the poor and the least advantaged.

Within this framework of complementary approaches, the remainder of this study will present an HRD-based model of rural poverty alleviation. That presentation will distinguish between the various levels of rural poverty alleviation (Chapter III). It will explore the principles worthy of application at each level (Chapter IV), and it will also elaborate a series of practical strategies (Chapter V). An illustrative outline of that presentation is presented in the figure on the next page.

A Model For Successful Rural Poverty Alleviation

Levels (Chapter III)

National Level
Comprehensive Level
Project Level
Community Level

Principles (Chapter IV)

Awareness-raising
Participation
Sustainability
Self-reliance

Strategies (Chapter V)

Establishing the lead agency

Development of local organizations

Targeting

Social mobilization

Monitoring and evaluation

Programme funding

Inter-agency coordination

Income generation

Recruitment and training

Ensuring financial sustainability

Organization and deployment

Social service provision

Levels of Rural Poverty Alleviation

<div style="text-align: right">III</div>

In the field we can witness programmes which differ fundamentally in their scope, approach and impact, and yet which all claim to be contributing to rural poverty alleviation. A close examination of these programmes suggests that they fall into four categories. Furthermore, it is apparent that the categories constitute a hierarchy, with each subsequent category incorporating and building on the previous one(s), mainly by operating at a higher level. For this reason, we shall call the four categories the four levels of rural poverty alleviation.

Moving from the lowest level programme through to the highest level programme, we shall see that not only does the scope of the programme increase but so also does the range and cost of the inputs to the programme. With each higher level, rural poverty alleviation becomes more dependent on an ever wider range of resources external to the rural community or communities that are the focus of the programmes. Progressively, therefore, the nature and extent of the rural poverty alleviation being implemented at each of the four levels is fundamentally different.

This chapter starts by presenting the four levels, and highlighting their distinctive characteristics and the strategies they commonly employ when they are successfully implemented.

A. LEVEL 1: THE COMMUNITY

Coverage:	A single community.
Programme agent:	A people's organization.
Common characteristics:	(a) Funding: very limited;
	(b) Staff: no paid staff;
	(c) Linkages: limited external links;
	(d) Focus: local community members or people's organization members;
	(e) Technology: minimal inputs of any kind.
Common key strategies:	(a) Awareness-raising;
	(b) Training;
	(c) Local participation: high level but limited to general community members;
	(d) Credit: on a small scale
	(e) Income generation of a limited nature.

The community level of rural poverty alleviation is one where a local people's organization takes on the task of alleviating poverty in its community. Very commonly the organization is a women's organization, usually receiving some limited and intermittent support from one or more external bodies in the form of advice, small grants and training opportunities.

There are typically no paid staff involved at this level, and the work is very dependent on individuals able and willing to devote considerable time to the work. In most cases, the great majority of these workers are women, but often supported by the men.

The strategies commonly and readily identified include awareness-raising and training, although these are not highly systematic in either their planning or delivery. More often than not they are relatively informal in their format and intermittent. In some cases, a small credit scheme is in operation, based either on an initial external grant for the purpose, or on the very small savings of members, and is utilized for selected and limited income-generation initiatives.

It can be assumed that a successful outcome of the activities will be an increase in families' cash flow, resulting, for example, from some improvements or diversification in the farming or home garden activities. These changes may be a result of the availability of small amounts of credit capital, improved knowledge, small cash crop development by the people's organization or community, or improvements in marketing arrangements through, for example, co-operation between local producers.

In the longer term, further outcomes may flow from raised levels of self-confidence, better standards of health care, higher literacy levels and higher educational achievements of children. At the community level, such work may result in greater community pride, reflected in more co-operative endeavours and some specific community projects of benefit to all community members.

B. LEVEL 2: THE PROJECT

Coverage:	One or more communities.
Programme agent:	NGO or government agency.
Common characteristics:	(a) Funding: varying but usually reasonable amounts of specific-purpose funding;
	(b) Staff: NGO or government agency paid staff;
	(c) Linkages: relatively limited range of links with those agencies specifically related to project's focus; one or more local communities or a local region;
	(d) Technology: limited range and specific to project, but usually crucial to success.
Common key strategies:	(a) Input of appropriate technology and resources;
	(b) Targeting of places and/or recipients;
	(c) Use of local institutional structures as partners or channels;
	(d) The key strategies of Level 1, but often used to a limited degree in that the focus is mainly on project completion.

The project level involves a specially devised and funded programme of delivering some specific goods or services to a targeted population within targeted villages or communities. The approach is usually a mono-sectoral one, in that the focus is on particular aspects of development in usually only one area, e.g. agriculture, health, education, housing or some other area. The project usually will have been developed, approved and funded outside the target community, and it is usually planned to operate for a limited period of time until task is completed. It is task-focused rather than change-focused, although if successful change should follow.

Such projects will usually be managed, if not implemented, by staff from the agency, but in most successful cases there will be close linkages with local NGOs or people's organizations. The often considerable cost of the project is usually being borne by external funding, but may be drawing on local government funds. Given the availability of a reasonable resource base, project staff are likely to have the requisite qualifications, and to be able to draw on the appropriate technology and other resource inputs.

The key strategies at the project level include a planned programme to address a specifically identified need. The approach involves the skilled application of what have been determined (usually in advance) to be the relevant inputs (especially physical resources, technology and knowledge) for the selected task of the project.

However, at the project level, one should draw significantly on the strategies used at the community level by fully involving the local community, albeit in a limited range of areas. This will usually be done by ensuring participation, commonly through entering into some form of partnership with a local organization (NGO or people's organization). If the project is to be sustainable, not only is participation important, but almost invariably awareness-raising and training are also important. The extent of both awareness-raising and training will vary with the project, but commonly both are limited by the purposes of the project.

The outcome of successful strategies at the project level is clearly the successful completion of the project. However, the long-term success of such projects in rural poverty alleviation terms will tend to depend not on the achievements of a specific project alone, but on it being implemented in conjunction with a range of other projects. The complexity of poverty renders its alleviation unlikely on a mono-sectoral approach, unless any such project occurs in conjunction with a series of other mono-sectoral projects, within ideally a carefully integrated development plan. By definition, a project addresses one dimension of poverty, and in and of itself it is unlikely to alleviate overall poverty to any significant degree.

C. LEVEL 3: COMPREHENSIVE

Coverage:	A region
Programme agent:	NGO or government coordinating structure
Common characteristics:	(a) Funding: a relatively high level of fairly flexible (i.e. not excessively ear-marked) external funding;
	(b) Staff: NGO or government agency paid staff, usually formed into a team structure;
	(c) Linkages: linked closely to a range of international, national and/or regional government agency and NGO organizations;

	(d)	Focus: a comparatively large region but with targeting;
	(e)	Technology: use of a diverse range of often well-advanced technology.
Common key strategies:	(a)	Team approach;
	(b)	Local institutional building;
	(c)	Promotion or provision of infrastructure;
	(d)	A carefully-planned, needs-based and targeted strategy;
	(e)	The key strategies of Levels 1 and 2.

At the comprehensive level, rural poverty alleviation is moved to a much higher plane, first by responding to the needs of a reasonably large region as a whole and, secondly, by drawing together into one comprehensive strategy the various sectors whose contribution is necessary in an integrated approach to development. Usually health, education, income-generation, infrastructure development, agriculture, rural industrialisation and perhaps also other areas are covered, to at least some degree.

The central agent at this level must be either a large, well-established and widely-recognized NGO, or a specially formed government team located ideally outside any specific service delivery sector of government. The central agent needs to be able to win the respect and cooperation of a wide network of NGO and government agency structures.

The range of activities undertaken necessitate many and varied inputs. A considerable sum of money is required to fund the operation; a wide range of technological services must be available to draw on; training will be called for in a range of areas; a variety of resources will be required; and the programme coordination and management task will require considerable technology.

The staff need to be competent and dynamic persons, able to win the support of a range of people, including bureaucrats, professionals and local community leaders. The demands of the work require ideally that staff operate as a team, with the team membership reflecting a range of disciplines and areas of experience and expertise.

The approach is a multi-faceted, multisectoral one which requires drawing into the programme, as partners, contributors and participants, a wide range of people's organizations, NGOs and government agencies. These agencies both contribute directly to the programme established and are encouraged to contribute in their own right to rural poverty alleviation. It is from this aspect of the programme that much of its long-term sustainability is derived.

Consistent with and consequent on the above characteristics, this level requires several additional key strategies to those required by the first two levels. These additional key strategies are the team approach adopted by staff, the need to build up local institutions as the core agents in local level development, the promotion of the region's infrastructure on which most of its on-going development depends, and the need to plan out an approach with extreme care and implement it with great attention to detail.

In addition to these strategies, the key strategies of levels 1 and 2 are important, but with most of them implemented in a planned, meticulous and highly competent manner, more so than will usually be found in levels 1 and 2.

The outcome of the successful comprehensive level of rural poverty alleviation will be the alleviation of poverty throughout that region to a significant degree. This is because all of the essential elements contributing to poverty, which are local and able to be addressed locally, are being addressed. External factors contributing to poverty are beyond the reach of the approach in any direct sense, but may well be influenced indirectly. When significant external factors remain unaddressed, clearly the extent of poverty alleviation achieved will be limited.

D.LEVEL 4: NATIONAL

Coverage:	The country as a whole, with the focus on its poverty-affected areas.
Programme agent:	Central government
Common characteristics:	(a) Funding: a very high level of international, or all or partly national, funding;
	(b) Staff: paid core staff, stimulating and working through a very large network of local staff;
	(c) Linkages: linked "downwards" to a wide range of government agency and NGO structures at the various levels, including the local level;
	(d) Focus: the country as a whole, but targeting the pockets of rural poverty;
	(e) Technology: the use of some modern technology at the central level while ensuring that local partners have access to appropriate technology.
Common key strategies:	(a) A wide-ranging series of partnerships;
	(b) A highly targeted approach;
	(c) The key strategies of levels 1, 2 and 3.

At the national level, rural poverty alleviation is moved to the highest plane possible and involves the country's central government. A central government devises a national strategy which has the ability to involve all levels of governance, all necessary levels of sectoral government activity, a range of commercial and NGO interests, and even people's organizations at the local level.

Very large sums of money are required at this level, usually coming from external multilateral funding sources, which are likely to become partners in the Programme and exercise considerable influence. Sufficient national resources are unlikely to be available in most developing countries. At the same time, full utilization of government funds already being distributed through its various agencies, as well as of previously underutilized local resources, is necessary.

At this level there is a strong central office whose main tasks are to stimulate action, secure the cooperation of relevant partners (usually in part a political process), provide training and other back-up services, and generally maintain, manage and control the total programme through effective leadership.

It is critical for such programmes to target carefully on a provincial, county, village and/or other basis, the prevailing pockets of poverty. In each of the areas targeted, a pre-designed poverty alleviation strategy is introduced through a nominated or established cooperating or implementing agency, with appropriate back-up from the centre. Beyond the blueprint provided,

local areas will need to exercise flexibility in their approach, and the decentralised national programme should encourage this.

Activities will normally span from the national to the local community levels, so that the full range of strategies is called for in addition to the two additional ones which represent the core elements of the central operation. These are the strategies of working through a complex set of partnerships, and of adopting a fairly rigorous targeting approach.

If successful, fairly immediate improvements to poverty-stricken areas will be made at this level. It will do so, firstly, by moving significant resources into such areas to be utilized within a carefully planned approach. In addition to this availability of resources, a range of government and often non-government instrumentalities will be drawn into the work, thus addressing poverty at a range of levels, within various fields of activity and using a diverse range of strategies, in a manner that will have long-term sustainability. Moreover, by addressing all of the factors contributing to poverty that are under the control or influence of the state, the alleviation of poverty is potentially relatively complete.

E. THE FOUR LEVELS COMPARED

The four levels are, in effect, addressing rural poverty in progressively more inclusive ways.

A local community can begin to tackle its poverty problems, with some but minimal external inputs, but is unlikely to bring about significant alleviation of poverty. Its work may be crucial, however, in preparing that community for participation in a broader approach by raising awareness levels, enhancing community members' self-confidence and improving basic well-being. It is, therefore, a level of rural poverty alleviation that should be encouraged or stimulated in all poverty affected rural areas, despite its seemingly limited poverty alleviation outcomes. This is a level of poverty alleviation which many government agencies and NGOs can stimulate and assist.

At the project level, one finds a situation where an agent external to one or more specific communities recognizes one area of need, which may be either a cause or symptom of poverty, and takes action to address that need. Depending on the significance of that need in the local poverty context, and on what is happening in that region in relation to a range of other poverty-related issues, and on the manner in which the project is implemented (basically the extent to which it is sustainable), the project may or may not contribute significantly to poverty alleviation. Sustainability, and hence success in poverty alleviation terms, is in large part determined by the incorporation within the project level of elements of the community level. This is because local participation should ensure that the project is consistent in every sense with local realities, and is in a sense owned by the local community.

The comprehensive level represents in effect the drawing together of the community and project levels, but with the project level covering a wide range of areas of need, or causes of poverty. The activities at the comprehensive level ensure that this range of projects is appropriately integrated and adopts a community focus. Inevitably, a comprehensive response demands an understanding of and a response to a region as a whole, and it is thus in geographical terms far more inclusive than the previous two levels.

Finally, at the national level, the comprehensive level of rural poverty alleviation is adopted, but its application is extended to all areas of the nation where rural poverty alleviation is found, by securing the necessary funds and establishing a large network of partnerships. As such, it is not only a comprehensive level of poverty alleviation but also a universal approach within the state context.

An ideal approach to rural poverty alleviation is, therefore, the incorporation of all four levels into a unity, with each level requiring the other three to be fully effective in achieving to the maximum its goal. However, the move to increasingly inclusive levels requires increasingly higher levels of funding to cover the increasingly greater inputs of resources of all kinds that are required. The move to more inclusive levels is also dependent on increasingly greater levels of political commitment to rural poverty alleviation - a commitment reflected through increasingly higher levels of government sector involvement and political support as well as funding. For both of these reasons, significant rural poverty alleviation is governed initially more by the prevailing circumstances, political and economic, than by an understanding of the strategies required.

Principles for Successful Rural Poverty Alleviation

<div align="right">IV</div>

We have distinguished principles from strategies, although the distinction is not always completely clear, on the basis that principles are ways of working which are strongly value based and which affect or underpin virtually every strategy to a greater or lesser degree. We have also confined ourselves to those principles which appear from our field studies and from the literature to be absolutely central to successful rural poverty alleviation. The principles which we shall present here are awareness-raising, participation, sustainability and self-reliance.

A. AWARENESS-RAISING

Awareness-raising is discussed first because it is frequently regarded as the essential precursor to all rural poverty alleviation. It is often implied that until people are fully aware of their poverty, of the nature and causes of it, and of the probability that it can be overcome, they will not be motivated to act. Rather they may remain passive as self-blame and low self-esteem, or fear of the unknown, or fatalistic attitudes inhibit any tendency to exercise some control over their situation. The assumption is, therefore, that people will not act to improve their situation unless they are adequately aware of the reality of that situation, instead of operating under some imagined sense of their situation. Let us consider awareness-raising as both a principle and a strategy applied to rural poverty alleviation programme beneficiaries.

Awareness-raising is a strategy by which people in a depressed or oppressed situation are helped to become aware of the nature of that situation. There can be many aspects of that awareness, including:

(a)   What is their precise situation;
(b)   What is giving rise to that situation;
(c)   How are they responding to the situation;
(d)   What are the consequences of the situation; and
(e)   What might be done to change the situation.

Awareness-raising as a strategy is a bringing into consciousness of one or more aspects of a situation which specific outsiders see as detrimental to a people's well-being. It is not, however, a form of brain-washing by specific outsiders to convince people of a particular perspective on their situation. It is the creation of the opportunity for people to reflect on, and bring to conscious awareness, the realities of their situation as they in fact perceive them, with a view to encouraging them to explore the possibilities of rectifying those aspects of their situation which may be amenable to change.

In the rural poverty alleviation context it is useful to consider awareness-raising in relation to poverty as an example of awareness-raising in general. People may be encouraged and assisted to think in terms of:

(a)   What aspects of their current situation cause the poor the most distress? This might include:

-       the time and energy required to carry water;
-       the constant illness of children;
-       the inability to read and write;
-       the inadequacy of accommodation; and
-       the lack of a regular income.

(b)   What might be the particular causes of that distress? Causes of those sources of distress might not always be apparent, so that education needs to be seen as part of awareness-raising. In relation to the above sources of distress, people may or may not be aware:

-       of how to tap local water sources or channel more distant ones;
-       of the links between public health, sanitation and nutrition and illness;
-       of strategies for improving literacy;
-       of alternative methods of constructing accommodation; and
-       of how to use local resources for income-generation purposes.

(c)   What lies behind those particular causes? There might be an inability to locate and make use of the resources required. People may need to become aware of, for example:

-       local resources not being used;
-       existing resources being inappropriately used;
-       an inequitable distribution of externally available resources;
-       an inability to implement certain solutions due to lack of necessary knowledge, technology and so on;
-       a degree of political inertia in relation to their well-being; and
-       an inability to mobilize their human and other resources to specific ends because of inadequate local institutional capacity.

(d)   What might be done to change the situation? The end result of awareness-raising should be the identification of specific and feasible ways of responding to the identified sources of distress, and perhaps even the formulation of an action plan for alleviating poverty.

Because the process of awareness-raising rests at every step on people reaching their own conclusions about their own situation, it means that they have a sense of ownership of any action

that follows, and will be the major participants and contributors in rectifying those elements in their situation with which they are dissatisfied.

Awareness-raising can be applied at the various levels at which rural poverty alleviation is undertaken. It may be an important element in working with a family in poverty (see Project Hope in China case study in the second volume of this series of publications); it is invariable a feature of working with the small groups of people in poverty formed as the first step in local organization development (see BRAC in Bangladesh case study); it may be used in working with local organizations such as cooperatives (see BRDB in Bangladesh case study); it may be used with whole communities (see Sarvodaya in Sri Lanka case study); and it may be used to bring a poor area or region or province to a heightened level of awareness of prevailing poverty (see the LGEDPA in China case study). In this sense its importance as a principle emerges, in that the strategies that can reflect it at the different levels will clearly vary.

It is unfortunately sometimes the case that sections of either the government or of the wider society have a vested interest in keeping people ignorant of some aspects of their reality. Where this is the case the deliberate use of an awareness-raising strategy may well bring resentment from such sections. At times this has led to official or unofficial action against programme staff or programme beneficiaries as a means of obstructing the programme's implementation.

Let us now consider possible strategies for awareness-raising.

(a) The establishment of groups: Effective awareness-raising occurs in a group context; hence a critical sub-strategy is to facilitate the formation of appropriately composed and located groups. Groups should usually be small, homogeneous in terms of gender and socio-economic status, and composed of neighbours.

(b) The provision of a facilitator: The group meetings need to be facilitated by a competent and sensitive person who will lead but not dominate, advise but encourage self-confidence, educate but draw substantially on the group's knowledge, and always work to build self-confidence and self-esteem.

(c) The use of data-gathering exercises: A group may need to draw together data on and make public the full extent of any situation of concern. Involving the group in planning a form of needs survey, and group members in data collection, are useful sub- strategies for bringing the full extent of a situation to people's awareness.

(d) The public displaying of data gathered: A useful sub-strategy is to devise public data boards on a particular matter on which the data gathered can be conveyed in pictorial or other clearly understandable form. Such data boards serve to educate and motivate a local community.

(e) Arranging interaction with other more advanced communities: Most people are encouraged and inspired by observing what others who were in a comparable situation have achieved. This can be done by organising a group visit to more advanced communities. An alternative is to have people from the other community come and speak about what they have achieved. A third and indirect approach is for workers to convey to a group what others have achieved, preferably in visual rather then verbal form.
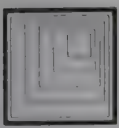
(f) Awareness through education: There will be times when awareness must flow from an enhanced knowledge base among the people concerned. The use of written, audio-visual or verbal presentations on public health, agriculture, new sources of income and so on, can create awareness of the prevailing situation, an understanding of the underlying causes and a vision of what might be achieved. Such education works best when it is related to the local realities and led by a sensitive and competent eductor.

(g) Use of the media: The various forms of public media are effective instruments in relation to several of the above sub-strategies. They can inform people of what is happening elsewhere, engage in educating, and promote insight into the causes of situations and distress. Used injudiciously, however, the media can also distort, mislead and reduce confidence. Its use in awareness-raising needs to be developed as a specific sub-strategy.

Awareness-raising is an important element in preparing staff for their roles in rural poverty alleviation, and applies at several levels. In a field of work such as this, staff self-awareness is very important. Many will not have been so closely involved with poverty, and being prepared for the effects that it may have on themselves is important. Staff awareness of the context in which they are working is also very important if they are to be effective in their roles. Finally staff awareness of the development process in all its complexity is also important. In this context awareness-raising is distinguished from knowledge development among staff.

Rural poverty alleviation will almost invariably involve the diversion of funds to this purpose from urban areas or other areas of expenditure. Given this fact, together with the fact that the rural poor usually lack any power to or channels for exerting an influence on public or NGO expenditure decisions, it is crucial that the public come to appreciate the importance of rural poverty alleviation. This is particularly true in relation to urban middle-class sections of society, whose political influence is usually considerable. A successful rural poverty alleviation programme will therefore undertake to engage in awareness-raising in relation to the work it is undertaking, the need for it and the probable benefits of it.

Any work with people who have been marginalised by the processes of development will be dependent upon generating a significant level of awareness in relation to those people and the work being undertaken to help them to move out of poverty. Barriers to rural poverty alleviation work are numerous and substantial. Awareness-raising as principle or strategy is absolutely central to the breaking down of those barriers and the generating of a climate within which rural poverty alleviation has a reasonable chance of success.

B. PARTICIPATION

Participation is a term applied to rural development and rural poverty alleviation in a variety of ways. It is sometimes used as an approach - the participatory approach to development. Sometimes it is a goal, as implied in the statement that "development is of the people, by the people and for the people". Sometimes it is a means to achieve certain ends; for example, for Uphoff (1991: 504) the three objectives of participatory development are efficiency, equity and empowerment. Participation is also a set of strategies. Whatever the manner in which the term is used, it is always clear that participation is of central importance; and therefore we have given it the status of a

guiding principle. As Uphoff says: we should enlist "the participation of intended beneficiaries as much as feasible in all aspects of project operations".

There are many different forms of participation, and it can be described in many different ways. Conscientisation, mobilization and empowerment are all in a sense participation, and so too is representation. Participation is essentially, however, reflected in a situation where people manage their own affairs, influence public decisions and otherwise are involved in activities that affect their economic and social lives. That level of participation can be achieved only when development is firmly located at the local level and undertaken at that level by the people of the locality through a variety of local and membership-based organizations.

Participation is not only important but crucial to poverty alleviation. The community level of rural poverty alleviation rests on participation; indeed it *is* participation. The project level has been shown time and again to be dependent for its longer-term effectiveness on participation. One cannot impose development on people, nor expect them to encompass its perceived benefits into their on-going lives unless they understand it, accept it and have the capacity and willingness to perpetuate it; and only participation can achieve those goals.

The comprehensive and national levels of rural poverty alleviation move us further away from the local level, potentially rendering participation more problematic. This is why it is essential that those levels encompass the community and project levels, and so work with and through local organizations in which the poor are full participants. Moreover, within a decentralised approach it is feasible to establish mechanisms that encourage upward and downward movement that enables all to participate at a variety of levels - essential to a well-based and well-integrated approach.

(a) Establishing a participatory approach: Participation is not a strategy to be added on within a programme. It must be integral to the programme, as for example is an approach in which people's organizations play a central role.

(b) Engaging in social mobilization: Social mobilization is a crucial strategy in ensuring the participation of the poor. Participation requires confidence and group support, and mobilization is designed to achieve both.

(c) Moving slowly: There is a temptation in any work, including development, to get in there, spend the funds and seek to achieve the goals quickly. Unfortunately, some aspects of accountability and approaches to programme management encourage this pattern. Participation, however, requires that the programme's implementation occur at the pace appropriate to the people and the context, not to the external demands on the lead agency.

(d) Ensuring participation at every stage in the programme: It is often stressed that participation needs to be at every stage in a programme's life - in the planning, implementation and evaluation stages. To encourage or facilitate participation only in certain aspects of implementation, or in making arrangements to carry on the work after implementation is completed (both quite common occurrences) is not going to achieve what the participation strategy should be achieving.

(e) Adopting a participatory style: Participation is a matter of structure and of procedure, but it is also a matter of style. Consultation reflects a style that is much less than participation, while

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partnership is a style that should result in full participation. Style will also, however, reflect attitudes. If the would-be participants are not respected and accepted as full people with dignity and potential they will not be treated as such, and if not treated as such participation becomes impossible in any complete sense.

(f) Enabling people to contribute: Just as it is important that participants have some sense of owning what is happening, so too is it important that they are encouraged to contribute to it. People can participate in a programme in which all of the inputs come from outside, implying that the local context has nothing of significance to offer; but the outcome will then be very different from those programmes in which the local people are regarded as a crucial resource, with knowledge, skills and other resources to contribute.

C. SUSTAINABILITY

It is often said of development initiatives that they are not sustainable. Projects are often implemented in a manner that is more resource-intensive than could ever be possible long-term; developments may depend on a knowledge base that local people do not have; introduced technology may depend on the availability of spare parts or on skills which turns out to be problematic; or the impact of the project on the ecology may be unsustainable. Ensuring sustainability has become central to contemporary thinking. What, then, does sustainability mean in a rural poverty alleviation context?

Fundamentally, sustainable development is "development that is likely to achieve lasting satisfaction of human needs and improvement in the quality of human life". Or, as another writer has said:

In broad terms the concept of sustainable development encompasses:

(a) Help for the very poor because they are left with no option other than to destroy their environment;
(b) The idea of self-reliant development within natural resource constraints;
(c) The idea of cost-effective development using differing economic criteria to the traditional approach; that is to say development should not degrade environmental quality, nor should it reduce productivity in the long run.

Finally, the World Commission on Environment and Development (1987: 8) defined sustainable development as development which meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.

Essentially, therefore, ensuring sustainability in a rural poverty alleviation context is ensuring that the gains that are made in alleviating poverty will not be of a short-term or temporary nature. Hence the poverty alleviation plan must include those elements which can be foundations for at least a basic degree of future well-being, if not prosperity. What are these elements?

First, poverty alleviation must rest not on the charity of others but on the enhanced capacities of those initially in poverty to interact with their environment in a manner that sustains life at an adequate level. A key aspect of this is an income-generation capacity. Hence poverty alleviation, to be sustainable, must result in the identification of income-generation opportunities which are

sustainable in the context, and the development in individuals of the knowledge and so on necessary to continue in that work in a relatively independent manner.

Secondly, continuing along any income-generation path requires that those involved are able to maintain the levels of health and family stability essential to achieving that end. Thus sustainable poverty alleviation cannot rest exclusively on income-generation initiatives, but must ensure that an appropriate personal and family base exists. This flows essentially from the knowledge people possess and their access to resources and services.

Thirdly, given that income-generation situations are seldom static, and that one would want income-generation opportunities to be sustainable across generations, sustainable rural poverty alleviation requires the creation of an appropriate local infrastructure. This infrastructure will usually include local organizations through which people can work together, local educational structures through which additional skills can be acquired and knowledge updated, and sources of credit consistent with the population's realities.

Fourthly, the entire poverty alleviation strategy that emerges must be ecologically sustainable, leaving the natural environment capable of accommodating the ensuing life-style over many generations.

Sustainable rural poverty alleviation will meet at the least these four requirements. This will not happen in most situations, however, unless the need for sustainability is appreciated and provided for right from the initial planning stage of development.

Poverty is not alleviated unless it is alleviated long-term. Temporary respite from poverty is not poverty alleviation; rather poverty alleviation must be, and be seen by participants to be, an overcoming of poverty for themselves and their children. Unless that can be achieved, not only is the poverty itself not alleviated but the sense of insecurity that is left in the people will fail to provide a bulwark against future adversity. For invariably those emerging from poverty will confront times of difficulty, and at such times they must feel the confidence and security to tackle those difficulties and move forward. This requires a state of mind that is appropriate, a sufficient knowledge base, and access to various structures and opportunities.

Strategies for ensuring sustainability include:

(a) Plan for sustainability at every step: At every point in the poverty alleviation programme, staff and participants must ask: "Is this sustainable?" and "What can be done to render it more sustainable?" These questions must influence each decision to introduce external resources, adopt a certain technology, establish certain structures and select specific income-generation opportunities.

(b) Train for sustainability: All participants in a rural poverty alleviation programme must be helped to understand that sustainability is vital and be taught what it means in each aspect of the programme.

(c) Introduce simple sustainability monitoring procedures: While monitoring and evaluation approaches can be highly sophisticated, they do not need to be. Programme participants can be
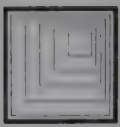
taught how to monitor selected activities to ensure that they are sustainable, and how to modify what is being done when signs that a procedure is not sustainable emerge.

D. SELF-RELIANCE

The contemporary understanding of development places a strong emphasis on the participation of people in their own development. It is also highly concerned about the sustainability of development initiatives, in ecological as well as other terms. Out of both of these emphases, but adding to them, has emerged the concept of self-reliance.

Self-reliance has become a principle in development, and especially in poverty alleviation, because it is both a goal and a value which should permeate the entire development process. Different writers refer to the importance of self-reliance in a range of contexts:

- The rural poor need to achieve self-reliance by developing their ability to mobilize, manage and control local and external resources themselves;
- Self-reliant organizations are a critical step in poverty alleviation among the rural poor;
- Self-reliant local communities are those which utilize local renewable resources and human skills to provide basic goods and services appropriate to their culture;
- Self-reliant local economies are diversified economies using appropriate technology to meet basic needs;
- Self-reliance can be applied to meeting health, education, housing and other needs; and
- Self-reliant nations develop domestic resources to meet domestic needs, thus avoiding undue external dependency.

Local self-reliance is not local self-sufficiency. It is a strategy which uses fully and effectively all available local resources, thus avoiding undue dependency on the assistance of outsiders. As such, self-reliance is relevant to individual poor people, groups of poverty-stricken people and impoverished communities. The poor are not without assets and access to local resources, and bringing about an understanding and acceptance of that fact is an important element in poverty alleviation.

Enhancing self-reliance in rural poverty alleviation has many benefits. It enhances people's confidence in their own ability to address their situation, while reducing their dependency on outside bodies or persons; it maximizes the probability that change will be consistent with the social and cultural realities within which it is occurring, thus increasing the likelihood of its acceptance; it ensures as far as one can that the changes introduced are consistent with physical environmental requirements, thus increasing the probability of ecological sustainability; and it tends to increase self-esteem and self-confidence, create a healthy interest in one's own or one's community's development, and generate a high level of commitment to and active involvement in the poverty alleviation process. Finally, self-reliance will always be important in a climate of scarce resources, as well as in the all-too-common situation where reliance on outside parties leaves one in a precarious longer-term situation.

Strategies for enhancing self-reliance are:

(a) Participation and local organization development: The principle of participation and the strategy of local organization development are important in enhancing self-reliance. An understanding of

the nature, extent and potential of local resources, of a personal and non-personal nature, will emerge as people participate actively in poverty alleviation, form local organizations to that end, and engage in a series of concrete steps aimed at improving their own well-being.

(b) Minimising external inputs: The danger in much development work is in outsiders assuming that it is they who have the mandate, knowledge and other resources to undertake others' development. An approach that promotes self-reliance takes the opposite approach. It assumes that people will determine their own development path, drawing as far as possible on local knowledge and resources to achieve that end. Only as they become conscious of inadequacies in the store of local knowledge and resources, and therefore request specific inputs from outside, should such be made available if this is feasible and consistent with the principle of sustainability.

(c) Encouraging people to seek out local resources: Frequently poor people and communities have become unaware of the full range of local resources. Their initial assumption will often be that the key to change in their situation lies beyond themselves, and inexperienced workers may too quickly reinforce this assumption by the premature provision of various goods and services. Enhancing self-reliance will require that workers do not hesitate to encourage poor people and communities to seek out local answers to the problems that they are identifying, and also local resources for implementing those answers. Only when that process is exhausted should people be encouraged and assisted to seek out resources located within their broader context.

Strategies for Successful Rural Poverty Alleviation

<div align="right">V</div>

A. CATEGORY I : PLANNING AND MANAGEMENT STRATEGIES

Strategy 1: Establishing the lead agency

The reality of all rural poverty alleviation programmes is that one agency, whether governmental or non-governmental, assumes the initiating and guiding role in the programme, even when the approach is a highly participatory one. That agency then becomes for that programme the lead agency. Below we will study the role of a lead agency, its nature, location and structure in poverty alleviation programmes.

What is a lead agency?

A lead agency is, therefore, essentially one that takes the lead in rural poverty alleviation. Rural poverty alleviation is not a programme imposed on a population by an outside agency, and we have stressed the importance of the principle of participation. On the other hand, it is unlikely to occur, especially in situations of extreme poverty, without the support and assistance of an outside body. Rural poverty alleviation calls for a lead agency in the sense of an agency which will lead the process, enabling other groups and organizations to play significant roles. Essentially the key players in rural poverty alleviation are the people themselves and the groups into which they form, but to be successful a lead agency is required.

The lead agency at the four levels

Any level of rural poverty alleviation requires a lead agency, and much of its success is dependent on that choice. However, the issues are somewhat different at the four basic levels.

At the community level, the lead agency will be an existing people's organization or the formation of one through the stimulation of an outside body - an NGO or a government agency. If an outside body engages in stimulating either the formation of a community body for poverty alleviation

purposes or the involvement in poverty alleviation of an existing body, an element of choi
likely to present. When it does, it seems very important that the central criterion be to choos
organization in which poor people in the region are, or can potentially be active members, gi
that a people's organization exists largely for the benefit of its own membership. Experie
would also strongly suggest that a successful lead agency must involve women to a signific
degree, given their crucial role in development and poverty alleviation. In many societies this
mean the involvement of the women's movement in one form or another.

At the project level, the lead agency is usually an external agency with the objective, funding
necessary expertise to engage in development. In some cases this is inevitable and appropriate
which case the secret to success lies in the lead agency acting as a lead agency and ensuring that lo
organizations are fully involved in the project throughout every phase of its life. Only by do
this are projects ensured of reasonable success, including sustainability. In other cases,
initiating body should establish a local organization as the lead agency in carrying out the detai
planning and implementation of the project, and itself remain in the background providing ba
up support.

At the comprehensive level, the lead agency's nature, location and structure are particula
important. This level requires a lead agency that is organizationally well situated in relation to
network of agencies which will need to be involved; politically well situated to command
respect and potential to influence that same network of agencies; administratively strong to han
the considerable sums of money involved and the complexity of the operation; and professiona
strong to attract and hold the type of professional leadership on which this approach depends. T
precise situation will clearly vary, and different issues emerge with an NGO lead agency as distir
from a government one, but the roles envisioned for the lead agency determine that it reflect t
above characteristics.

At the national level of rural poverty alleviation, the lead agency must clearly be located with
the national government. In some cases, it may be important to determine where in the cent
government system will represent a location from which one can work with and through a rar
of government agencies. The lead agency may be relatively small, given the decentralised strate
required, but its organizational and political location is likely to indicate to potential partners
all levels just how important the rural poverty alleviation programme is to the government of t
day, and thus determine the extent of their cooperation.

Sub-strategies guiding the choice of lead agency

Choice, location, structure and leadership of the lead agency are all dimensions of this strate
requiring careful attention. In many situations, however, it is the lead agency which is initiati
the programme, so that choice becomes irrelevant. However, location structure and leadersh
are all still relevant, and a lead agency's appreciation of this fact will motivate the agency concern
to examine carefully its own characteristics before proceeding with the poverty alleviatir
programme. At the comprehensive and national levels of poverty alleviation, however, it is al
a question of devising a lead agency which will be most effective in achieving the goal.

The following sub-strategies will ensure that the lead agency which is established by or emerg
from the programme is appropriate to the context.

) *The collection of social data:* All rural poverty alleviation programme planning, including the
establishment of a lead agency, should rest firmly on a full understanding of the local context.
Social data can be gathered which will identify the nature and likely causes of the prevailing
poverty, the likely opposition to changing the status quo, the potential resources available to
implement a poverty alleviation programme, the cultural factors relevant to finalising a
programme and so on. These data will enable the decision-makers to develop the programme in
detail, and determine the type of lead agency best able to provide the necessary leadership.

) *Careful consideration of the principles:* If the principles enunciated above are crucial to a
successful rural poverty alleviation programme then ideally each aspect of the programme should
be judged against those principles. In the case of the lead agency strategy, this means a careful
consideration as to which form of lead agency will:

> Maximize awareness-raising: presumably the lead agency which is most capable of raising
> the level of awareness of the government, general public, staff and beneficiaries will
> constitute the best lead agency;
> Maximize participation: presumably the lead agency which is least threatening to significant
> groups and most accessible in its organizational structure will maximize participation;
> Maximize sustainability: presumably a lead agency which is able to devolve decision-making
> to the poor, and make full use of the potential of local people's and other resources will
> maximize sustainability; and
> Maximize self-reliance: presumably a lead agency which is constantly throwing the poor
> and their organizations back on to their own resources, and yet be ready to back up those
> resources with additional inputs, will maximize self-reliance.

) *The careful consideration of all aspects of a lead agency:* Some of the aspects which might be
considered are:

> Auspice: should the lead agency be inside or apart from government?
> Location: should the agency locate in any one government department or NGO, or retain
> a neutral and independent status which will enable it to function as the pivotal point for a
> range of governmental and non-governmental organizations?
> Size: should the lead agency be comparatively small, exemplifying its essential roles of
> coordinator, catalyst and enabler?
> Composition: should the lead agency be made up of staff with specific qualifications, of a
> particular age and gender and so on?
> Structure: should the core of the lead agency constitute a team, reflect a hierarchical
> structure, or adopt some other structure?
> Relationship to field: should the lead agency maintain the role of lead agency in any
> situation for a specified and limited period only, and then move out partially or completely,
> and maintain an independence of local organizational development?

Strategy 2: Targeting of programme recipients

One of the reasons why many development projects and programmes over the years have failed
to alleviate poverty is that they have been captured by those with the social and the economic
status to do so. Once this occurs, it is not only that these beneficiaries may be unwilling to share
the developing opportunities with others but that the directions which the development takes are
often inappropriate for the poor of that community. In this way, development has often
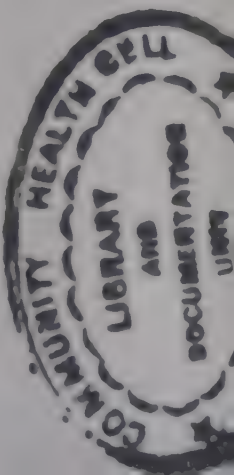
perpetuated inequality and failed to alleviate poverty. It is now clear that poverty alleviation programs, if they are to be successful, must directly target the poorer people.

What is targeting?

Targeting is the process of seeking out those in any community who are in poverty, developing an understanding of their situation(s), devising with them a poverty alleviation programme which is consistent with that situation, and then implementing that programme in such a manner as to ensure that it is those in poverty who largely determine what is done, when and for whom.

Targeting may, however, take different forms. It may represent the targeting of particular parts of a country where poverty is greater than elsewhere. It may mean targeting of particular categories of people: for example, those with no land, female-headed households or members of particular ethnic or religious groups. Very frequently, it requires seeking out the families in poverty in any community, regardless of the reasons for their poverty.

It is important not to under-estimate the difficulties in targeting. In the first place, quite often considerable effort is required to locate and establish meaningful contact with those in poverty, and quite often those responsible for development initiatives are unwilling to put in this effort at a time long before any tangible results can begin to emerge. In the second place, targeting will almost invariably bring out opposition from those who either have a vested interest in maintaining poverty, or who wish to see the available resources used in the interests of themselves and their social grouping. It often requires considerable will-power, therefore, for poverty alleviation programmes to maintain a targeting approach in the face of opposition from some funding sources and influential social groupings. Targeting also requires putting considerable effort into public awareness-raising, seeking to elicit widespread understanding of the rationale and importance of poverty alleviation.

Why is targeting important?

On the argument advanced above, targeting is more than important: it is indispensable to poverty alleviation. Programmes which do not target seldom reach those who are among the poorest in any context, largely because access to programmes of any kind is usually a consequence of power, status and/or access to existing resources. Without targeting, the only programmes likely to benefit the very poorest are those which are inherently of no interest to anyone other than the very poor, and programmes whose success could not conceivably affect the interests of third parties. Such programmes probably do not exist.

It should also be pointed out, however, that targeting is of importance for other reasons. First, targeting emphasizes the need for all poverty alleviation programmes to reflect the specific circumstances of a particular context. Targeting thus ensures that from the very beginning a programme is developed to meet the needs of a particular population. No matter how polished any poverty alleviation strategy has been, it is certain to require some adaptation to any specific context.

Secondly, targeting implies that poverty alleviation is itself a very conscious and deliberate initiative. It is not sufficient to argue that any development initiative will contribute ultimately

to poverty alleviation. Poverty is a very specific, albeit varied, condition, the alleviation of which requires programmes geared to the nature of poverty.

Finally, targeting is important for enhancing self-confidence among the poor. It is common for poorer people to sense that they constitute an after-thought in relation to any economic or social initiative, and that reaction can reinforce their sense of marginality and exclusion. Unfortunately, some poverty alleviation programmes tend to have the same effect, thus rendering minimal their potential to contribute significantly to poverty alleviation. An important consequence of targeting is that it says to the poorer members of a community that they are acknowledged, valued and worthy of specific attention to their plight. Targeting thus contributes directly to the crucial element of building self-esteem.

When might targeting be counter-productive?

While targeting has received wide-spread support, and is clearly in one sense indispensable to poverty alleviation, it does possess possible risks.

One of the risks associated with targeting is that its very language contravenes the principle of participation. It designates people as 'targets' on the lives of whom a programme is to make an impact. This is unfortunate language, as Uphoff (1991) points out:

> No longer should people be identified as 'target groups'. Rather, if we must speak of them abstractly, we should consider them as "intended beneficiaries". They are to be benefited, rather than impacted.

Other writers would wish to go even further and see the poor not even as beneficiaries but as partners, but that may often represent wishful thinking.

The second, and more important, risk associated with targeting the poor presupposes that the poverty alleviation program will identify, organise and work with "the poor" as a population apart from other people among whom they dwell. The effect of this could be to marginalise the poor even further, and clearly an awareness of this possibility will ensure that one plans to avoid it. Similarly, diverting signficant resources to the designated poor may create resentment on the part of the slightly less poor, thus adversely affecting community relations. This is a not uncommon problem in several different types of contexts. In this context it constitutes an additional reason for adhering as closely as possible to the principle of self-reliance, but also to always seeing poverty alleviation in its broader community and even societal context.

Sub-strategies for targeting

(a) Development of a database: In many contexts the existence of the poor is known but not their identity. They exist in remote places, are unrecorded in official statistics, are vague faces in a mass of people, and so on. A crucial sub-strategy in targeting is, therefore, to discover who are the poor in any context who need to be targeted. Frequently this is not easy to achieve, but with diligent fieldwork it is usually possible. It is usually possible and beneficial to involve the intended beneficiaries themselves in the development of the data base.

(b) Provision of an Appropriate Management Structure: Given the danger of poverty-alleviation programmes being sidetracked, to the point where the poorest of the potential recipients miss out, a useful sub-strategy for avoiding this is to ensure a management structure which will be relatively impervious to manipulation. The involvement within the management structure of representatives of the poor, of committed non-government organization representatives and of non-political government representatives can assist in this regard. What that will mean in practice will depend always on the prevailing circumstances.

(c) Employment of Appropriate Staff: The actual identification of programme participants is usually the responsibility of staff employed as fieldworkers to implement the programme. It is important, therefore, that field staff be trained to identify, or to work through others (e.g. community leaders) to identify those who may be appropriate beneficiaries of the programme. The tasks are then to win their confidence and secure their active participation, both of which tasks will commonly require very able workers.

Strategy 3: Incorporating monitoring and evaluation

There is no disguising the reality that rural poverty alleviation is a difficult and somewhat problematic enterprise. Many attempts of various kinds to alleviate poverty have failed. In addition, the overall dimensions of poverty have not reflected the benefits of economic growth and the resulting increased prosperity for some, suggesting that there are many forces at work both generating more poverty and blocking any possible impact of various activities on existing poverty. In an enterprise as problematic as this one is, therefore, it is all the more important that a monitoring and evaluation strategy be an aspect of every programme.

What is a monitoring and evaluation strategy?

A monitoring and evaluation strategy is the development of mechanisms for collecting data on every aspect of the programme's implementation and outcome; and then assessing those data against a set of predetermined levels of achievement reflected in specific criteria. The process enables managers, field staff and programme participants to appreciate the extent of success being achieved by current strategies and to determine whether a modification of strategies or their implementation is called for.

Why is monitoring and evaluation important?

In the area of rural poverty alleviation, the reality is that every programme has to be seen as a trial or an experiment, with seldom more than an average chance of success. For this reason each programme must be carefully planned to start with, carefully monitored throughout, and immediately modified when the indications are that without modifications success at a reasonable level is unlikely to be realised.

A second reason for the importance of a monitoring and evaluation strategy, especially when implemented within a participatory approach, is to ensure that all involved see any failures in the programme to be not necessarily a result of their own short-comings, but due to selecting the wrong strategy or sub-strategy and so on. It is important for those in poverty to learn that alleviating poverty is in most cases a result of knowing how to address it; and they will learn this

from monitoring progress, modifying strategies accordingly and observing the improvements that will hopefully follow.

Sub-strategies for monitoring and evaluation

There are many ways in which a monitoring and evaluation strategy can be implemented, but there are some sub-strategies that emerge as being of particular significance in contributing to successful rural poverty alleviation programmes.

(a) Involving programme beneficiaries in data collection and analysis: If rural poverty alleviation programme beneficiaries see a program as theirs, and appreciate the importance of, and become directly involved in the monitoring and evaluation aspect, several important benefits follow. The programme beneficiaries will become actively involved in the data collection; they will come to appreciate the goals and the process of poverty alleviation; they will begin to assess for themselves the appropriateness of the strategies being used; motivation for change levels are likely to rise; and the interpretation of the data becomes a learning process about the community, the poverty alleviation process and themselves.

(b) Making monitoring and evaluation a very public process: While this sub-strategy in a sense is a derivative of the first, it is important in itself for several reasons. For staff, community leaders and perhaps others, a very public process removes any apprehension that it is their performance which is being assessed by outsiders. For beneficiaries the public approach should operate as a strong motivation for continuing to participate in the work. For members of the wider public, the public approach represents an important community education tool, while perhaps exerting political pressure on those whose cooperation in the programme is important but has not always been forthcoming.

(c) Adopting clear indicators of progress in the poverty alleviation process: Clearly both beneficiaries' participation in the process and the effectiveness of the public approach will be enhanced by the adoption of indicators for the monitoring and evaluation process which are clear and acceptable to all parties. They will also provide a clear indication of the accepted goals for the poverty alleviation, ensuring that participants are neither imagining unrealistically high outcomes nor operating with fatalistically low expectations.

(d) An ability to be flexible: All intervention in the lives of people, and in their communities and organizations, needs to be flexible. Prevailable circumstances are so highly variable, over places and times, that the use of set intervention techniques will invariably be counter-productive. All satisfactory intervention is on the basis of models which have been well tried and tested, but models are only models needing to be adapted to place and time. Therefore for the monitoring and evaluation process to be effective. It needed to be complemented by an approach to the work which is above all flexible. When the evaluation indicates that the anticipated results are not forthcoming those responsible must be sufficiently flexible to vary the relevant elements of the programme.

Strategy 4: Securing inter-agency coordination

Much of the discussion to date has highlighted the importance of rural poverty alleviation adopting a multisectoral approach, and then ensuring that the various sectors constitute an

integrated approach. As we have seen, poverty is a multi-faceted phenomenon, having multiple causes and calling for a multisectoral response. Hence successful rural poverty alleviation cannot flow from a programme which focuses exclusively on the agricultural, health, education, housing, income-generation or any other dimension. Rather it calls for a plan that addresses simultaneously all of the elements of a situation which are contributing significantly to the prevailing poverty. The goal of this strategy is thus a multisectoral approach.

What is a multisectoral approach?

A multisectoral approach to poverty alleviation is one which identifies very early in the process all of the elements of a situation contributing to poverty. It then moves towards a plan which incorporates as many of those elements as it is feasible to incorporate in the plan. Invariably this will mean the establishment of partnerships, or of a network of agencies, so that the bodies responsible for or capable of contributing to the alleviation of one or more facets of the poverty will be actively involved in the programme. Finally, the involvement of a range of agencies, sectors, and inevitably therefore disciplines will require careful planning and management to ensure that the programme is well integrated.

Why is a multisectoral approach important?

Obviously the major reason for the importance of the multisectoral approach is that the nature of poverty, and therefore of poverty alleviation, calls for the identification of and attention to all contributing factors. In most cases, a failure to address all factors will result in a failure to alleviate poverty.

A second element in the importance of this strategy is the need to involve as wide a range of government and non-government agencies in the poverty alleviation enterprise as is possible. Not only is this likely to be important for a particular programme; it is important also because the nature of poverty and the difficulty of its alleviation calls for a high level of awareness of and experience in the alleviation of poverty, and a commitment to the process of poverty alleviation. A successful rural poverty alleviation programme leaves in its wake a large network of people and agencies whose on-going work, whatever their sector, will be influenced by their involvement in a well-planned and implemented integrated multisectoral poverty alleviation programme. Ideally they will continue to collaborate across their sectoral boundaries, and to engage in that collaboration as well as in their own individual pursuits in a manner fully cognisant of the poverty reality and the need and potential to transform it.

Let us turn then to the question of how to coordinate the range of organizations which poverty alleviation requires, recognising that the more complex the level of rural poverty alleviation, the more important the role of coordination becomes. At the community level, coordination arises only in relation to the work of a catalyst stimulating this approach, and then only to a minor degree. It may, for example, involve coordinating any government services available to an area so that together they may facilitate the work of a People's Organization.

At the project level of rural poverty alleviation, the more complex the project the more important the role of coordination. Again, this is particularly the case if the nature of the project is one where the contributions of a range of other agencies are potentially important to the project. The lead

agency or its workers should seek to coordinate those elements of service delivery so that they work in harmony towards a common goal.

At the comprehensive level coordination is crucial, and so it is at the national level. At both levels the fundamental approach consists of the careful coordination of a range of participating agencies, activities and workers. Drawn together on the basis of a poverty alleviation plan, at these levels there are in effect a range of what might be called "participating" or "implementing" agencies. Most of these agencies will be focusing on only one aspect of the total need; the plan, however, requires that each need be responded to in such a way that the possibilities of success are maximized.

Sub-strategies for planning, developing and coordinating a multisectoral approach

(a) Beginning with a plan: A successful multisectoral approach will be achieved only if a suitable plan forms the basis of the work. The plan must contain all the activities which participating agencies are going to be called upon to contribute and indicate the manner in which they are to be undertaken. In this way, the nature of the coordination required is already set out clearly.

(b) Engaging in an outreach process: Implementing the multisectoral approach must then begin by reaching out to the relevant agencies engaged in the various sectors in any area of operation. This may involve: identifying the relevant network of agencies; visiting them; inviting them to planning sessions or on to planning bodies; and, with their consent, establishing modes of collaboration such as partnerships or a system of implementing agencies.

(c) Selection of participating agencies: To some extent the lead agency in the programme has the responsibility of selecting the participating agencies and recruiting their services. Sometimes there will be a choice, and one needs to choose an agency accustomed to working collaboratively. In other cases there is no choice, but the selection process can emphasize the nature and importance of cooperation in the activity to be undertaken.

(d) Devising an integrating process: The establishment of a series of partnerships, or a system of securing inter-agency coordination as a crucial element in the poverty alleviation plan is a crucial first step, but if this approach is to work it will need an integrating mechanism. This will often take the form of a regular meeting of partners. It is crucial that all of the Participating Agencies maintain a vision of the overall programme together with an understanding of the stage that has been reached. It is important also that each understands and respects the roles, nature of and any difficulties being experienced by all of the other Participating Agencies. Finally the meeting enables all agencies to appreciate the complementarity of their various functions, and so to devise even more effective ways of working together.

Other integrating mechanisms are in-service training sessions in which all participate, and the work of skilled field workers who can identify situations where specific forms of collaboration would be beneficial and facilitate such. Ultimately, however, it is by working together in field situations that the representatives of the various sectors begin to appreciate each other's importance and to understand the nature of each other's work. Hence it is collaboration in the field that should be promoted wherever possible.

(e) Adopting a people-centred approach: An important factor or sub-strategy in ensuring programme integration is the people-centred approach. The sectoral approach inevitably partialised people

in an unrealistic and often unhelpful manner. By contrast, ensuring that the people themselves are at the centre of any poverty alleviation programme will inevitably break down sector boundaries as the focus becomes the well-being of the people.

B. CATEGORY II : STAFF DEVELOPMENT

Strategy 5: Recruitment and training of programme staff

Beyond the community level, poverty alleviation programmes require staff, and the first question that arises relates to the criteria to be used in their selection. To what degree should staff be indigenous to the region where the programme is to be initiated? What is the range and balance of disciplines to be reflected among the staff? What experience should staff ideally have? Are questions of age, gender and marital status important? Even the matter of the membership of the staff selection committee might be important.

Effective rural poverty alleviation has certain requirements in which staff qualities are critical. First, the ability to form partnerships with the people for whom the programme is devised and their local organizations is crucial, and calls for some very specific staff qualities. Second, the ability of staff to function as catalysts, facilitators and motivators represents a related set of qualities, for roles at the local level are predominantly of that nature. Thirdly, the need for staff as a whole to reflect the major bodies of knowledge which the programme calls for is crucial. While staff in the programme may draw upon outsiders to carry out specific training, to advise on particular problems and so on, the nature of poverty alleviation in the field requires that programme staff have the knowledge to advise and engage in on-going training, and to win the confidence of the local people in part by demonstrating that they have that knowledge. Fourthly, staff must be able to work together as a team, and that requires some special qualities.

It is arguable that the most important element in poverty alleviation is the staff. Staff may operate with inadequate funding and support, and be thereby limited in what they can achieve; on the other hand, neither funds nor any other element can achieve very much at all if the staff involved lack a sufficient level of the requisite qualities. What are those requisite qualities? Four aspects have been delineated above, but what is really critical is the total package of these qualities. For example, a high knowledge level will not compensate for an inability to relate to the local people, or vice versa.

Staff must be able to inspire the poor among whom they operate as catalysts, the government and non-government personnel with which they need to collaborate, the politicians and donor agencies' representatives whose support they require, and each other as they engage jointly in what is always a difficult task.

Of course appropriate staff are not just selected. They need to be introduced to the work carefully, prepared for it effectively, enabled to develop fully within it, and supported throughout, and this brings us to the question of training.

What types of staff training is called for?

There is no simple answer to the question of the form that staff training should take. Relevant factors in determining the nature of training will depend to a significant degree on the education
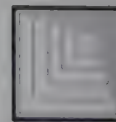
and past experience of staff and the precise nature of the work being undertaken. In addition, however, important areas where training is frequently required can be identified.

First, all staff should be introduced into the cultural-social-political-economic context within which they will be operating. While this may represent an orientation more than training, it will often indicate specific areas in which training for at least some staff may be called for. Such areas could include cross-cultural issues, particular forms of conflict resolution, and how to undertake poverty alleviation strategies in specific contexts.

Secondly, all staff should be well-equipped to operate in field positions involving relative isolation and lack of external supports. Such training will include self-awareness sessions and regular opportunities to explore and understand staff's personal reactions to the field experience.

Thirdly and most importantly, staff will require training in rural poverty alleviation. An examination of the realities of rural poverty alleviation, which this ESCAP project has undertaken (see the case-studies), confirms both the difficulties inherent in the work, and the importance of understanding, and adapting to any particular context, those strategies and sub-strategies most likely to be conducive to success. Trainers who are knowledgable of the experience of rural poverty alleviation in a range of situations can prepare any staff for this type of work. However, rural poverty alleviation is not a set of techniques which one learns in advance and applies. It is a dynamic and interactive type of work; hence training for the work requires, in addition to preparatory training, the provision of opportunities for staff to meet regularly, reflect on their field experiences and be helped to maintain a high level of flexibility in the implementation of the appropriate strategies.

Basically staff training should represent an on-going process of providing staff with the support, insight and knowledge base required by an often very demanding work context. Such training has significant implications for the calibre of trainer required.

Why is training important?

The discussion to date has already implied the importance of training. To be more explicit, however, we need to emphasize several aspects of the importance of staff training.

The first importance of training is to ensure that the objectives of the poverty alleviation programme are achieved, and the calibre of staff is critical to that achievement. Far too often the energy expended on planning and funding a programme is wasted through inadequate attention to the staffing factor, and especially to on-going staff training.

The second importance of training is staff protection. Very frequently staff who work in rural poverty alleviation are highly committed individuals, sometimes undertaking the work at considerable sacrifice. It is relatively easy for those in charge to adopt the easy approach of leaving staff to carry out the work unaided, for such staff are relatively undemanding. Experience suggests, however, that such neglect is detrimental to both staff and programme interests. It is not uncommon to witness in the field the phenomenon of "staff burn-out", high rates of staff turnover, and frustrated or disillusioned staff. When these outcomes occur, not only do staff suffer but the potential of the programme will clearly be undermined.
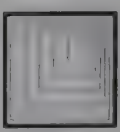
The third aspect of the importance of staff training worth emphasising here is the link between training and evaluation. There is great advantage in using on-going staff training as a way of monitoring progress in implementing the programme. The one set of sessions can serve that end while also identifying staff experiences which should ideally influence the content of staff training. As we shall see later, regular staff meetings can contribute to both goals.

While the focus of this strategy is on programme staff, especially operative staff, this should not be seen as implying that the same processes are unimportant for either programme administrative staff or those recruited in the field to play a significant role in the programme's implementation. In relation to the second category of staff, who are very often voluntary and part-time, their recruitment and training are of very great significance. As the case-studies reveal, very frequently the programme beneficiaries identify a network of individuals to play very important roles at the local community level. They often represent the application at the local level of many of the poverty alleviation strategies; hence their recruitment and training are of the greatest importance. At the same time, different issues emerge for this category of staff, compared with the core programme staff, so that separate sub-strategies are suggested.

Sub-strategies in staff selection and training

(a)   Staff selection:

- Selecting for a well thought-out plan: It is impossible to select staff effectively if those responsible are not very clear about the programme and the work or roles it will entail. One must select to a programme plan.
- Prior consultation with community leaders: Given that any poverty alleviation programme will be located in one or more specific localities, the nature of that or those localities is important for staff selection. Ideally visits to the locality at the preparatory stage should include consultation, with members of local communities and with others knowledgable about the area, regarding the type of staff required by the programme.
- Facilitating a degree of self-selection: It is useful to enable potential staff to envision the type of work to be undertaken with as much reality as possible. This will enable staff to determine whether they are interested in or suited to such work, and it may lead to some withdrawing their applications.
- Community involvement in staff selection: A more controversial or perhaps variable sub-strategy is the involvement of community representatives in the selection. Community involvement may be of the poor, especially if People's Organizations have already been formed among them, or it may be of the potential group of partner agencies.

(b)   Staff training:

- Bringing programme staff together regularly: If staff training is to be an on-going process, staff should meet regularly in an environment which will encourage discussion of their field experience, heighten their insight into the understanding of what is happening in the field, provide encouragement and mutual support, and furnish at least the opportunity for enhancing staff knowledge levels.
- Arranging for an appropriate trainer to attend at least some staff meetings: Considerable learning can occur through staff interaction without the presence of a designated trainer.

Periodically, however, it will be helpful to bring in a trainer to guide discussion and introduce experience from elsewhere on specific aspects of the work being undertaken.

- Inculcating an understanding of the importance of training: The provision of training requires a clear decision by certain individuals to make such provision. Clearly, however, it is often a low priority within management objectives and budgeting. For this to change, those government and non-government bodies with some broad responsibility for rural poverty alleviation in a region or country should ensure that middle-level management has a clear understanding of training needs.

- The provision of materials useful for training purposes: There would appear to be a dearth of training materials available for use in the field; and bodies such as ESCAP entrusted with an overall responsibility for rural poverty alleviation need to act quickly to ensure that that gap is filled.

- The facilitation of cross-programme training: It will clearly be difficult for some programmes to undertake significant training, although all programmes should ensure at the very least that their field staff meet regularly in carefully chaired in-service training sessions. Therefore, many programmes will benefit from the provision of more centralised training in this field. One or more of their staff should be enabled to attend such training, and those staff can then act as trainers for other staff, and for others such as the members of local partner organizations. Responsibility for this more centralised form of training should lie with one or more designated bodies in each country.

Sub-strategies for involving volunteers

(a) Community selection of volunteers: If volunteers are selected by their community, or self-selected but with community approval, their roles in poverty alleviation will be the more effective. Leading Agency staff may well influence this process but should not dominate it.

(b) Affirming the important roles of volunteers: Volunteers' reward for their work consists often of their enhanced status within their community. There will be many ways in which the programme can affirm that status.

(c) Training and deployment of volunteers: Potential volunteers respond better when the situations for which they are volunteering are clearly defined, including training for the work, and may be seen even as the first step towards a vocation in health, education or whatever.

(d) Facilitating the work of volunteers: Although it is commonly found to be both impossible and counter-productive to pay volunteers, some forms of recompense can be not only a form of reward but also a means of facilitating their work. This may take the form of providing transport, a sort of uniform, a food entitlement and so on. In addition to such material rewards, regular contact with volunteers by Lead Agency staff or others appointed by them is important for several reasons. It acknowledges their service, represents a form of on-going training by responding to problems encountered and may establish the volunteers as a mutually supportive group.

Strategy 6: Organization and deployment of programme staff

Once the staff for a poverty alleviation programme have been selected, and their initial and ongoing training arranged, it is essential that a strategy for fully utilising them be devised. The work situation will, of course, vary from programme to programme. For example, in some
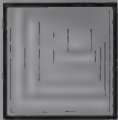
situations all the field staff will be operating virtually daily from a central base; while in other situations staff may need to be outposted to often quite remote villages or settlements for periods of perhaps a month or more.

Much will depend on how the core operative (as distinct from administrative) staff are deployed. In successful rural poverty alleviation programmes these staff are used very often as catalysts, facilitators or enablers. This means that their roles will vary as the programme evolves. Initially, considerable time may need to be spent with local groups of the poor, unless it is appropriate to recruit others locally for that purpose. As People's Organizations form, contact becomes more intermittent, and the role changes from perhaps that of social mobilizer to that of adviser.

In relation to the potential network of government partners, initially considerable time may be required to help staff there to appreciate the basic strategies of rural poverty alleviation and to consider how they might change their way of working so as to maximize their contribution to poverty alleviation. As these government agencies become more understanding and more involved, the relationship becomes much more one of partnership.

The task deployment of staff will thus vary from place to place and over time. Taking, therefore, the specific characteristics of the work situation, and indeed of the staff, into account, it is important to devise a strategy which will hold the staff together and support them in the work they are doing, in the most effective way. It is important that this matter be taken seriously for several reasons:

- Rural poverty alleviation is a difficult and often slow process, and staff will require a highly supportive staffing arrangement.
- Rural poverty alleviation will inevitably involve a multi-disciplinary staff, and the integrated nature of the programme requires that the staff become an integrated whole, able to contribute to each other's evolving capacity.
- Staff recruited into this work are often young graduates, sometimes working in their first place of work, and as such a mutually supporting arrangement which maximizes staff exchanges and thus staff learning is highly beneficial.

While various models of staff organization may achieve these objectives, there is no doubt that a popular and tried and proven model is the team model. For this reason, let us present the team model as it is commonly encountered. While it may not be always appropriate, it is a well-tested and undoubtedly an often beneficial approach to staff organization.

What is the team approach?

The team is a staffing structure in which a number of persons, often of similar background, function under leadership, but with minimal hierarchy, using the strategy of regular team interaction for planning and decision-making, professional development and mutual support.

Ideally the leader is of similar background to the other team members, with a strong commitment to the work being undertaken and some charismatic qualities to inspire dedication.

Normally team members are relatively homogeneous in age, in having training and skills relevant to the work, and in their commitment to both the work itself and to the team. Team composition,

in terms of qualifications and gender, will depend on the precise nature of the work; however, ideally the team will encompass the range of qualities that the work requires, qualities possessed by members who are able to convey their knowledge and understanding to other team members.

The team will meet regularly, ideally weekly and at least monthly, in a setting and circumstances permitting a relaxed and supportive reflection on the work, the support of team members experiencing particular difficulties, opportunities for inputs from team members and outsiders, and planning of the on-going work. These meetings will include time for team members to socialise. Every three months or so the team should be involved in a more extensive retreat, of perhaps two days, where the above activities can occur in a setting conducive to team building.

Why is the team approach important?

A team approach will contribute in many work contexts. It is particularly important where the work:

- Involves outreach: that is, working away from office or other structures;
- Is isolated: that is, involves spending periods working alone in more remote situations;
- Progresses slowly: that is, is long-term work where indications of success are not always apparent; and
- Can be traumatic: that is, there is an element of danger, experiences of confrontation or situations of such poverty and suffering that any worker with sensitivity is likely to be affected by it.

Each of these sets of circumstances is difficult for the average person to handle, especially if they are constant elements of the work. The team approach is important because it builds solidarity around the worker. In particular, the team meetings:

- Confirm for each member the worthwhileness of the work, thus strengthening commitment;
- Allow members to talk about their disappointments, difficulties and dilemmas and draw on the experiences of the others;
- Encourage members to verbalise their suffering and receive support; and
- Affirm that members are not alone in what they are undertaking.

Scope for the team approach

While the above discussion has focused on core field staff, the team model may well be applicable to locally recruited workers, who are more often than not volunteers. If a network of community health workers, or credit scheme monitors and so on is established, there is no doubt that the manner of the interaction within the network is very relevant to the success of the work. Similarly, the involvement of a network of partner organizations in the overall poverty alleviation programme often comes down to a network of key personnel, whose regular interaction may with benefit assume some of the features of a team.

Sub-strategies for team building

(a) Selection of members: Members need to be selected on the basis of both the qualities (education, experience and personality) required by the work, and of the ability to function as a team member.

(b) Selection of team leader: A team leader needs to be strongly committed to the work at hand and able to: inspire commitment in others, understand and empathise with the work team members are undertaking, share in the work of the team on a daily basis, provide leadership in planning and decision-making within the context of team, and present the team to and ably support it in its interaction with the outside world.

(c) Organization of the work: The work needs to be organised so that either the team as a whole interacts weekly, or sub-teams (even of two members) meet at least weekly and the team perhaps monthly.

(d) Facilities for the team: A team requires a team headquarters where all members can feel at home, where desk work can be handled and team meetings held in an atmosphere conducive to the team spirit and mode of operation, and where team members can relax and be renewed. If headquarters is in the midst of the work and visited frequently by various other people, the team may require access to a retreat centre sufficiently removed from the work to permit undisturbed periods of reflection and planning.

(e) Support for the leader and team: Team members tend to be work-oriented, and so better at engaging in their day-to-day work than handling the necessary interactions with outside organizations. While that is in part the leader's task, team work benefits from having a person, office or committee behind it, who or which is strongly committed to the team and its work, and has the status and ability to ensure that the team's necessary lines of communication, funding and general support remain open and intact.

C. CATEGORY III : LOCAL CAPACITY-BUILDING

Strategy 7: The development of local organizations

Rural poverty situations vary. Sometimes entire communities exist in a poverty-stricken environment, and these will usually be communities with their internal structures and active or embryonic organizations. At other times, there exists as part of a wider community a network of families, or even individuals, whose situations are dominated by poverty, and who are effectively isolated from the more affluent members of the communities of which they are ostensibly part. In this case the poor lack both organizations to which they have access and their own organizations.

One of the most widely accepted and strongly held views in the area of rural poverty alleviation is the importance of strengthening local organizations, building them where there are none and incorporating them into any poverty alleviation programme. Participatory, self-reliant and sustainable rural poverty alleviation builds ultimately on strong local organizations, either consisting of those in poverty or fully open to those in poverty. In most situations, however, the poor are excluded from organizations formed and controlled by those who are better-off, so that almost invariably it is found to be necessary to start with building local organizations comprised

of the poor. These then form the bases from which the poor can begin to engage with, and eventually participate fully in, the community as a whole.

What are local organizations?

Local organizations are organizations, composed of local members, which act on behalf of and are accountable to their membership. They take a variety of forms and serve a variety of purposes, but essentially they enable people in a locality to work together. In addition, they can act as intermediaries between local residents and external bodies. Some of these local organizations can and do play a key role in rural development generally, and rural poverty alleviation in particular.

What are the roles of local organizations in rural poverty alleviation?

Rural poverty alleviation requires the active involvement of those in poverty. Poverty as attitude involves a change in attitudes; poverty as circumstance involves changes in ones circumstances; and poverty as neglect requires political action to end that neglect. In the majority of situations, however, change is unlikely without the support of the group. People learn together, develop confidence from observing and being supported by each other, undertake more significant physical changes through joint action, and influence outside agencies to a far greater degree by adopting a united voice. Of course this potential is the reason why some of the powers that be are ambivalent about local organizations.

What is local organization development?

Many local organizations emerge spontaneously from situations. The more poverty-stricken a community, however, the less likely this is to occur. Mobilization is therefore required to achieve local organization development (see Strategy 8). Basically, local organization development is the initiation of sub-strategies which will result in drawing the poor residents in a locality together into appropriate social structures.

Sub-strategies in local organization development

(a) Establishing contact: In many if not most places, the poor do not constitute a total community, nor are they necessarily highly visible. It is usually important to engage in a process of identifying who are the poor, in order that one might then establish contact with them.

(b) Encouraging small group formation: The situation of many poor may lead them to see participation in a large group situation as frightening or overwhelming. Successful poverty alleviation commences with the formation of very small groups of people who are living in relatively close proximity to each other and have various characteristics in common.

(c) Allowing people time to emerge: Many workers in the field say that it can require three or even more months for some group members even to begin to engage with the group. Group participation is a new experience for them, for which they are not prepared in terms of confidence, trust and group communication skills.

(d) Providing opportunities for tangible tasks: It is important that group members relate group attendance to specific and understandable goals which can translate into tasks. The focus on tasks
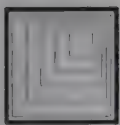
is important both for removing the focus from the person and for inculcating a sense of achievement through which skills are recognized or developed. The task may be a communal project, such as building a pre-school centre, or a savings scheme involving a regular contribution, a savings book to record this and a focus for discussing various skills. Tasks are important for group development and as a demonstration of the purpose and potential of the overall poverty alleviation programme.

(e) Building groups into organizations: There comes a time, however, when poverty alleviation will require broader-based organizations than the small neighbourhood group. Ensuring that the on-going value of the small group is not lost, the time comes when poverty alleviation will require a local organization to which the groups can contribute and from the wider range of activities of which they can benefit.

(f) Use and development of local leadership: Inevitably local leaders will emerge from within the small groups. These potential leaders can be offered training opportunities additional to those provided to the group and encouraged to adopt more and more of a leadership role. These people in an area will then constitute the nucleus around which the local organization may form, with the lead agency ensuring that this development is facilitated by offering whatever supports are required.

(g) Establishment of partnerships in action: Organizations benefit from having clear roles, and a lead agency or others can therefore assist by opening up opportunities for a local organization to play a specific and obviously significant role in relation to particular programmes or projects. It is around such roles that organizational membership grows and consolidates, that leadership develops further, and that respect for the organization from the wider community emerges - all important aspects of the local organization if it is to be successful.

Strategy 8: Social mobilization

Whether or not those in poverty belong to communities with their own internal organization or are socially excluded from the communities within which they live, rural poverty alleviation usually commences with employing the strategy of social mobilization.

What is social mobilization?

Social mobilization is not a term commonly used in the literature, but it is often encountered in the field. In part it reflects the principle of awareness-raising, in that it rests squarely on the premise that people need to become fully aware of their situation. However, the process of becoming aware is quite different from the old paternalistic teacher-student relationship; rather it is a truly participatory process in which the poor are enabled to accept total responsibility for both understanding their situation and taking action to change it. That process of enabling understanding is part of the strategy of social mobilization.

In part also social mobilization encompasses the strategy of local organization development discussed under Strategy 7. A central goal of social mobilization is to enable the poor to form organizations through which their poverty alleviation is, to a considerable degree, made possible. The sub-strategies of forming the poor into small neighbourhood groups, which can eventually come together into local organizations, is an important aspect of social mobilization.

Essentially, however, social mobilization is engaging in whatever activities are together likely to encourage the poor to develop and act on the conviction that their poverty is not an immutable reality which they have to accept. Building awareness, knowledge and organization, together with the often very personalised encouragement of a 'social mobilizer' may all be necessary to achieve this goal.

Why is social mobilization important?

Without social mobilization poverty alleviation can never be anything more than the actions of outsiders designed to alleviate the poverty of a designated population. This may be done by distributing essential resources such as food and money, or by undertaking specific projects designed to improve people's quality of life, such as providing wells for drinking water, irrigation systems, or developing literacy or other skills. All such contributions to poverty alleviation are limited in their impact on poverty, often not sustainable and likely to strengthen any existing tendency to be dependent on outsiders. As such they contravene all four of the basic principles outlined above in Section D.

Social mobilization is important because it begins the total process of poverty alleviation by mobilising people into engaging in individual, family and group action to overcome their poverty. It recognizes the resources which even the very poorest of people possess; it bestows on people the dignity of being full participants in taking action to address their needs; it begins the process of building people's confidence in their own ability, alone but particularly corporately, to address those aspects of their situation which they consider to require addressing; and it ensures that the whole process of poverty alleviation in that particular context will be people-centred - that is, the process will centre on the needs, priorities and aspirations of that group of people, reflecting their cultural values and belief systems to the extent the people wish to do so, and acknowledging local realities as a now aware group of people understand them.

Sub-strategies for achieving social mobilization

(a) Deployment of social mobilizers: Social mobilization requires social mobilizers. It requires workers who are skilful in developing people's self-confidence, disseminating knowledge only as required and so as not to induce dependency, and engaging in a fully participatory approach to awareness-raising. Before such activities can be undertaken, however, the social mobilizers need to encourage the identified potential beneficiaries to come together into a group situation which, in terms of its size, composition and so on, is conducive to social mobilization. To this end the poverty alleviation programme will need to have devised a plan for deploying social mobilizers in such a way that they identify, meet and begin to work with those in poverty. The characteristics and work of the social mobilizers is the crucial sub-strategy, and they need to be carefully selected and trained for this purpose.

(b) Establishing the environment for social mobilization: Social-mobilization of a population long dominated by extreme poverty represents in effect a revolution in their lives. It is a major transformation of people's attitudes (e.g. acceptance that their work can be different), psyche (e.g. self-esteem) and behaviour (e.g. engaging in analysis of their situation). For this to occur conditions have to be conducive. Such conditions include the nature of the group formed; the arrangements for the group's meetings, including place and frequency; and the balance of activities

undertaken at group meetings (see Strategy 7). There are no universal guidelines in any of these matters. Social mobilization groups vary enormously, reflecting the variations between the many local contexts. While the final choices in each of the above areas should, as soon as possible, be made by the people involved, initially a range of decisions need to be taken by the social mobilizer. Underlying those decisions, however, should be a sub-strategy devised in the programme planning phase which reflects the local cultural, social and political realities.

(c) Allowing sufficient time for the social mobilization: Social mobilization can be an extremely slow process, given, as has been said, that it represents an enormous transformation in many people. If the process is not given sufficient time then some participants may find it difficult to handle the subsequent action phase, and may withdraw from the programme. On the other hand, for most participants the overriding motivation is to engage in activities which will alleviate their poverty, so that the period spent in social mobilization prior to engaging in specific poverty alleviation strategies should not be excessive. The ideal situation is to merge the social mobilization and action phases to at least some degree. In this way, participants can experience something of what the programme is designed to achieve and come to appreciate the importance of the period of self-preparation.

(d) Ensuring that self mobilization is a self-initiating process: An important aspect of self-mobilization is the degree of self-reliance it reflects. While clearly the social mobilizer can and will take considerable initiative, participants should be encouraged to be pro-active. Their actions may take the form of data gathering on particular topics, sharing experiences and insights with other groups, accepting opportunities for knowledge building and so on. It is important that participants themselves be aware of the importance of this phase, and their involvement in initiating action will enhance that awareness.

D. CATEGORY IV : RESOURCE MOBILIZATION AND GENERATION

Strategy 9: Funding the programme

The limitation of the community level of rural poverty alleviation stems in large part from the relative absence of funds and other resources. The approach is one that is dependent essentially on community members' concern for other community members, and presupposes a community in which there are some who are not preoccupied with poverty and who possess a concern for others. The so-called subsistent affluence of the Pacific countries with strong Christian churches epitomise that situation, although that situation is beginning to change in many Pacific countries.

Significant effective rural poverty alleviation requires a range of inputs which need to be either provided or purchased, and so it comes at a price - often a very high price. It therefore calls for a funding strategy - a strategy for raising and managing funds sufficient for the purpose. Perhaps this is a reason why such programmes seldom cover much more than 10 or 15 per cent of the people in poverty in a nation, at least until an effective national programme is introduced.

Given the relative shortage of funds for rural poverty alleviation, whether in the national coffers, the international aid budget or the local communities, the funding strategy is one requiring ingenuity and resourcefulness, with measures that may be regarded as sub-strategies.

Funding sub-strategies

(a) Self-reliance: Self-reliance, although presented above as a principle, is also a strategy of considerable importance, but in the funding context it may be regarded as a sub-strategy. Part of its purpose is to reduce the funding required from external sources by maximising the use made of all of a community's existing resources. Important also for other reasons, this sub-strategy is essential from a narrow funding perspective, given the existing financial climate.

(b) Use of food aid: Considerable aid is provided in the form of food, the nature and origins of which are often controversial subjects. This food aid can be used in ways that intensify poverty, by inducing dependency and so on. It may, however, be used to assist in poverty alleviation within food-for-work schemes, by selling it and using the proceeds, or in other imaginative ways. Given the need for resources, it is important that when food aid is available it be used, but constructively and sensitively.

(c) Good management: Aid monies as well as other funds come usually with strict accountability requirements. On the one hand, it is important therefore that the funding available for poverty alleviation be carefully managed so that it can be accounted for. Mis-management and corruption are among the most significant enemies of poverty alleviation. On the other hand, it is crucial that the conditions attached to funding, including the accountability requirements, do not stifle the creativity that successful poverty alleviation requires, or contradict such essential strategies as social mobilization of the poor, which can be a long and time-consuming strategy, by imposing time-lines which are too narrow.

(d) Use of a detailed and realistic plan: To avoid the situation where funding requirements drive the programme, it is important that funding be obtained on the basis of a poverty alleviation plan developed in considerable detail and reflecting the requirements of successful rural poverty alleviation. This sub-strategy is not only crucial to funding but an important device for educating donor agencies and others.

(e) Use and training of local staff: Staffing represents an important set of strategies in rural poverty alleviation, and there are several important reasons for using and training local staff rather than using expatriate staff. One such reason, however, is the funding situation. The cost differential between employing expatriate staff and local staff is often enormous, thus rendering the use of local staff, where possible and appropriate, a very important sub-strategy.

(f) Fund-raising: While several sub-strategies may keep to a minimum the amount of funding to be raised, some funds must still be raised if a programme is to be initiated and continued. It is important, therefore, that either the Lead Agency or some body operating outside the implementation of the programme engage in a successful fund-raising campaign. Given the highly competitive nature of the fund-raising industry, the importance of handling this dimension of the work carefully cannot be over-emphasized. The appropriate sub-strategies, however, will vary from context to context.

(g) Community education: If, however, adequate funding of poverty alleviation programmes is to occur, several relevant 'communities' must be well aware of the importance, feasibility and nature of poverty alleviation. In the past there have been those in positions of influence who regarded economic growth as the answer to poverty; there have also been those who thought that poverty could be alleviated through short-term and limited-in-scope project work; and there have been

those who thought that the poor did not deserve or merit any significant diversion of available funds. If poverty alleviation programmes are to receive adequate funding, the government sector, aid agencies, often the non-government sector and the general public must appreciate that poverty alleviation is ultimately crucial to the prosperity and peace not only of the poor but of all people, that its alleviation is feasible, and that that alleviation process needs to be of a certain kind if it is to be successful.

Strategy 10: Income generation

The ultimate goal of rural poverty alleviation in the great majority of cases must be providing people with an income-generation source. This may be needed because people have access to ample food but no source of a cash income, the absence of which may exclude their families from some medical services, education, a freedom to choose and opportunities to find fulfilment of their lives. Alternatively, generating an income may be essential because it represents the only source of a people's livelihood.

The form of the income-generation achieved by a successful rural poverty alleviation programme will vary. It may represent an expansion of the use of available land so as to generate a cash income. It may represent enabling the poor to develop and manage a micro-enterprise, either to supplement a previously inadequate income or as their sole source of income. Alternatively, it may represent the establishment of community enterprises in which the poor can secure regular employment. Whatever the form that the income-generation takes, it will invariably require some capital, and that represents capital which the poor do not possess.

Below, three types of income generation will be discussed: provision of credit schemes, provision of micro-enterprise opportunities, and the provision of training and skills development.

Provision of credit schemes

A first requirement in developing an income-generation capacity is the provision of capital by establishing credit schemes. Credit schemes represent essentially the funding of programme participants so that they might engage actively in alleviating their own poverty, ultimately through income-generation initiatives. They are, however, more than this. They represent a strategy which, incidentally but significantly, is capable of inculcating certain habits, such as regular saving, and teaching certain skills, such as basic book-keeping and financial management.

Credit schemes can be effective at a variety of levels. At the most basic level, a community group may initiate a small-scale credit scheme into which members contribute of their meagre resources weekly and are able in turn to draw small amounts. At an intermediate level, a relatively small sum is made available to a lead agency and loaned out on set terms. At the highest level, members are able to access the credit funds of financial institutions, with special regulations opening up access to such schemes to the poor.

The importance of credit schemes

The only resource possessed by the rural poor in many places is their labour, and this is a resource which, in the circumstances, is all too easily exploited. Moreover, labour, in most contexts, is in a surplus situation.

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Even those with a little land often lack both the knowledge and the capital to use that land for income-generation purposes. Credit schemes represent the most effective way of injecting capital into such situations, especially if the provision of credit is designed carefully to be an appropriate response to presenting need. Very frequently, a credit scheme will not be successful without parallel schemes, offering, for example, some ready-devised investment opportunities together with relevant training, and effective monitoring and support structures.

Without the availability of credit, even on the smallest of scales, the poor will have no potential of lifting themselves out of poverty, for all their resources are and must be directed towards staying alive. Yet, with careful planning, an investment facilitated by credit may contribute directly to the family's survival and generate a little cash injection which can broaden enormously the family's range of choices.

Credit is, of course, not usually commercially available to poor people who have no collateral and so represent a high risk. Yet many poverty alleviation credit schemes are achieving repayment rates in excess of 90 per cent - a remarkable achievement compared with the standard commercial credit market. The secret to this lies in the sub-strategies employed.

The provision of rural credit is today a very well developed enterprise, around which considerable experience has been accumulated. While there are many technical aspects to credit, a few sub-strategies seem to stand out.

Sub-strategies for successful credit schemes

(a) Employing a group strategy: A common and clearly successful strategy is to link borrowers into groups of five or so. The group approves the loan, supports the borrower in executing their investment scheme and operates as a social pressure to ensure repayment of the loan. It also helps to compensate for the borrowers' relative inexperience.

(b) Insisting on Regular Repayments: Even when the purpose for which the loan is sought will bring no dividends for some time, the borrower is usually obliged to begin repayments immediately and regularly. In effect this policy is a form of compulsory saving, but it ensures also that when the returns on the investment are received they are virtually available in full for further investment.

(c) Imposing high interest rates on relatively short-term loans: An effective sub-strategy for the viability of credit schemes seems to be to impose relatively high interest rates. The purpose of this is in part to ensure that there is an income that can assist borrowers as a group in other ways. Some of the funds may go into community projects; some may be used to lend to members for emergency requirements; some may be used to take out an insurance policy on the loans, for the sake of both the scheme and the borrowers; and some will be used to cover bad debts.

Provision of micro-enterprise opportunities

It is not, however, sufficient to provide the poor with access to credit and then expect them to devise successful ways in which the available funds can be used. One reason often why the poor are poor is that they have insufficient knowledge, skills and confidence for identifying and taking advantage of any income-generation opportunities that are available. In these circumstances it is an important strategy to identify viable income-generation schemes and evolve a plan whereby

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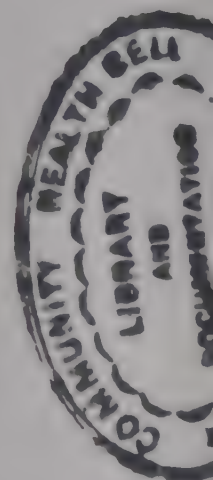
programme participants can be launched into those schemes. Part of the rural poverty alleviation programme is to identify a product or service, for which a sustained market exists, and involving a level of knowledge, skills and so on which the potential programme beneficiaries can manage.

This provision of micro-enterprise schemes can exist at various levels. At the community level of rural poverty alleviation it may involve identifying those garden products for which there is a market and which individual participants could produce with a very small loan and a support system. (See the case study on Mount Hagen in Papua New Guinea.)

At the comprehensive level, the micro-enterprise scheme may represent the development of a multi-faceted rural industry in which individuals can play a specific limited role. The establishment of a poultry industry in Bangladesh and the careful identification of specific roles within it, was at that level. (See BRDB case study.) In some poverty stricken areas the best solution may be the establishment of community enterprises in which individuals can secure employment.

Whichever the level, the plan which is called for must be based on adequate market research and identify roles for which the poor can be trained and through which they may have sustainable income-generating potential.

Once again this provision of income-generating opportunities is a highly complex and often very technical undertaking, but behind it there are some key sub-strategies.

Sub-strategies for Enhancing Micro-Enterprise Opportunities

(a) Providing the income-generation schemes in which borrowers can participate: Accepting that many of the poor have no experience of income-generation schemes, business enterprises generally and handling of funds, it is advantageous when the poverty alleviation programme establishes one or more schemes in which programme beneficiaries can participate. The security of the newcomer to credit is virtually guaranteed by the fact that the income-generation scheme, in which their loan enables them to become involved, has been carefully planned and implemented. With that experience behind them, most credit recipients should be able eventually to move into the unprotected market place.

(b) Introducing beneficiaries to the available income-generation schemes: An important aspect of this strategy, probably consisting in most programmes of a complex set of sub-strategies, is the method used for introducing participants into the role they have selected. While the precise sub-strategies will vary, it is important that the process be simple and one for which people can readily be trained, and that the actual process of introduction is designed to enhance confidence by providing adequate support over a sufficient period of time. (Good examples of this are presented in the case studies.)

(c) Facilitating self-employment: While carefully devised income-generation schemes may be necessary for a majority of those in extreme poverty, there should always be some who can be assisted in moving into self-employment in areas of their choice. Clearly the strategies of credit provision and of training and skills development will be important to this end, provided that they are designed for this purpose among others. The availability of advice and appropriate support schemes are also likely to be useful in facilitating self-employment, by assisting individuals to identify viable opportunities and supporting their early efforts.

Provision of training and skills development

Just as credit schemes are relevant to more than income-generation, but having that as the main purpose, so too is skills development potentially relevant to all of life but having a specific relationship to income-generation.

What is skills development?

Skills development at the general level is a strategy in which the people involved in a poverty alleviation programme recognize the need for them to acquire additional skills of particular kinds, and either request or seek out ways in which they can acquire those skills. Skills development, to be successful, flows from the poverty alleviation process, being initiated by the people and undertaken in a manner consistent with the developments in the overall poverty alleviation programme.

Successful skills development is not the identification by outsiders of the range of skills a people will require for the poverty alleviation process, and the subsequent provision of those skills in advance of other activities within a major skills development programme: rather successful skills development is a fully participatory process, usually occurring in a piecemeal and incremental manner so that the provision of skills tends to coincide with the identification by the people of the need for specific skills.

The form that the skills development process takes will vary considerably. Much of it represents on-going learning provided either by the programme staff or by others (e.g government or non-government agency staff) invited in for that purpose. Sometimes it will require the provision of a structured skills development process to which people from a range of communities might come. In this case it is often a matter of "training the trainers", in that participants will be encouraged to impart what they have learnt to others back in their communities. Sometimes skills development will require the provision of an on-going more central training institution which those involved in their poverty alleviation are encouraged and assisted to access.

Why is skills development important?

The obvious reason for skills development is that a lack of certain skills is prejudicial to poverty alleviation. People may need to learn a variety of skills if they are to improve the health levels of their households, or participate in a credit scheme, or engage in a particular income-generation programme, and so on. At every stage in the whole poverty-alleviation process, it is important that the participants, existing and potential, recognize the need for skills development and are enabled to acquire the relevant skills in an efficient and effective way.

A second important reason for skills development is because it empowers people and builds their self-confidence. This is achieved in the optimal manner when it is the people themselves who identify the need for the skill, play an active role in acquiring it, and are involved immediately (or even simultaneously) in applying that skill to a task at hand. What is happening through this process is not just the acquisition of skills, important though that is, but the emergence of an attitude that they are able to take some control of their own destiny, to confront and overcome difficulties, and indeed to initiate improvements in their life situation.

Skills development for income-generation schemes

When a programme rests on an especially devised income-generation strategy, it is clearly essential that, in addition to general skills development, participants receive training to enable them to participate successfully in the income-generation scheme. This may represent more formal and more directed training than the general skills development, but it needs to be recognized that the two will always be complementary. It will seldom be sufficient to train participants only in the skills required for their income-generation roles. Holistic development is as important in this context as in any other.

Sub-strategies for skills development

(a) The use of enablers or catalysts: An important role of programme staff is as enablers or catalysts in the skills development process. Staff play a major role in assisting participants to identify a required skill, perhaps learn it on the spot or seek out an avenue through which they can acquire it.

(b) The establishment of training-the-trainers projects: Agencies will of course have many insights regarding the skills helpful to poverty alleviation, and a useful sub-strategy is to provide and promote skills development courses, seeking always to encourage participants to pass the skills they have learnt on to others.

(c) The utilisation of group learning techniques: There is no doubt that learning occurs best in a group context. People benefit from learning and implementing skills in small groups, as distinct from individually or in formal and impersonal settings.

(d) The establishment of local education centres: Programmes have demonstrated the benefits emanating from the establishment of a simple physical centre to operate as a learning, sharing and resource centre for local residents. Such centres should ideally possess a range of freely available appropriate resources, be a base for informal trainers available to encourage and sit informally with those who come, provide the facility for arranging more formal skills development programmes, and generally serve as a reminder to local people of the importance and potential of skills development. Such centres ideally should belong to the people and be operated by them.

(e) Inculcating in local agencies a skills development attitude: A successful poverty alleviation programme will communicate to the network of local representatives of government and non-government agencies the message that they all have a role to play in skills development. Especially it is important to get across the message that it is more important to encourage in people a positive attitude towards learning than it is to engage in either providing the skills through outsiders or establishing formal training opportunities.

(f) Social learning - learning by doing: Much experience in the field affirms the importance of learning arising out of interaction with one's local environment - that is, out of personal experience. Many people are not assisted by formal training relating to future situations which they may not even be able to envisage. An important sub-strategy is, therefore, for learning both to relate to people's past experiences and to arise spontaneously from their current experiences. While more difficult to achieve, such learning seems undoubtedly to suit the situation of the rural poor far better than do formal learning arrangements.

Strategy 11: Ensuring financial sustainability

One of the reasons why rural poverty exists is that there are inadequate resources in the local environment. While individuals may always be deficient in necessary resources, the same is true of communities and regions. These resource deficiencies may be in the form of physical resources - an inadequacy of plant materials (seedlings etc.), of building materials (concrete, steel etc.), of technical materials (motors of various kinds), and so on. Alternatively, the inadequacies may relate to knowledge, as in situations where the resources may be available but the people may lack the knowledge to use them constructively in alleviating their poverty. Or again, the inadequacies may relate to financial resources, in that both the resources and the knowledge to use them may be available, but the necessary funds to do so may not be available.

An important element in rural poverty alleviation, from the project level up, is therefore the provision of resources. As participants in programmes engage in any aspect of their poverty alleviation, be it the construction of schools, health clinics, roads or irrigation systems, be it the development of agricultural or forestry plots, or be it micro-enterprise development, it is almost inevitable that some resource inputs will be necessary. The provision of resources is thus a crucial strategy.

What is resource provision?

Essentially resource provision is the introduction into a situation of poverty of a resource not available in that context and crucial to the poverty alleviation enterprise. Two essential elements of this understanding are, first, that the provision from outside of resources should occur only when no appropriate resources are available locally and, second, only when the provision of that resource is crucial. Resourcing poverty alleviation from external sources, when that is at the expense of using locally-available resources, or at a level which is excessive and unnecessary for the tasks at hand, is very likely to be ultimately counter-productive, being unsustainable.

Moreover, resource provision is not a simple process of the provision of external resources. Resource provision can occur in a variety of ways - nature and appropriateness of the resources, mode of the actual provision and sustainability of the resourcing process all being crucial elements in determining the best way in any specific context. Resource provision as a strategy should, therefore, be defined as making available, to those locally involved as participants and partners in the poverty alleviation program, a range of resources seen as appropriate to the programme and able to be provided in a manner that will facilitate an effective and sustainable poverty alleviation process undertaken at a local community level.

The importance of resource provision

Invariably the majority in any population afflicted by poverty will lack selected bodies of knowledge, material resources and opportunities to undertake training. Depending on the specific nature of the local context, including the availability of local resources, poverty alleviation will commonly depend on a variety of resource inputs. Training, or the enhancement of knowledge in selected areas is almost invariably required. The provision of appropriate technology and other such resources is almost always necessary. Finally, access to credit is very often the key to improving income-generation. Without the provision of external resources it is seldom possible for poverty levels to be alleviated to any significant degree. However, once again it must be

emphasized that the nature of the resources provided and the mode of that provision is of far greater importance than the quantity of resources provided.

The establishment of external links

No rural poverty alleviation programme can be open-ended. Initially there needs to be and will be an input of resources, ranging from very minimal to major inputs, but ultimately a people and a community must achieve self-reliance. That does not mean self-sufficiency; it means that they must possess the ability to reach out and secure those resources which are crucial to their on-going well-being but not locally available. Even while struggling to overcome poverty, external links are important, for two reasons. First, no poverty alleviation programme can provide all of the resources required; and, second, it is important that right from the beginning people in poverty acquire the ability to locate and negotiate access to the necessary resources.

What are external links?

External links are the channels opened up between a community in poverty and external organizations of various kinds along which can flow the various inputs required to alleviate that poverty. The strategy is then one of assisting a specific population in poverty to establish those external links.

Why are external links important?

External links are crucial if poverty alleviation is to occur to a significant degree. Even at the community level, very few People's Organizations exist in complete isolation. Some are part of larger movements, such as a national women's movement; some are assisted by officials from the local offices of government agencies; some have access to training courses; and some are the recipients of development aid funds.

Once poverty alleviation assumes significant proportions, as in the comprehensive level, the network of linkages becomes very extensive and very complex, as indeed they usually are for communities or regions not experiencing poverty. Through these channels flow the specific poverty alleviation inputs of goods and services (e.g. technology and training), the social service supports which any community requires, and the negotiations to ensure not only service delivery but infrastructure development and so on.

Sub-strategies for successful resource provision

(a) Ensure that resources are based on recipients' identification of a deficiency: Unsuccessful resource provision stems very frequently from one of three factors: the provision of inappropriate resources; the provision of resources that are not wanted, understood or accepted by the recipients; and the provision of resources in a way that creates dependency and is unsustainable. An important sub-strategy that protects against each of these dangers is to base the provision of resources on a specific and explicit request from those directly involved in the poverty alleviation programme. Of course, it is appropriate for a worker to suggest to the programme participants that it may be appropriate to request specific resources, or to intimate that certain resources are likely to be available, but it is almost invariably inappropriate to introduce any external resources without extensive consultation along the lines suggested.

(b) Encourage people to explore alternative resources: People in poverty may well be inclined to grasp at the possibility of external assistance without considering the possible consequences, alternatives available and so on. As the saying goes, "beggars cannot be choosers" tends to be the dominant assumption. Despite this tendency, successful rural poverty alleviation requires that workers encourage programme participants to consider carefully the consequences of accepting, and of refusing to accept, available resources. They should also be helped to understand the advantages and disadvantages of the various resource options that might exist. That process is in and of itself an important aspect of knowledge and skill development if handled correctly.

(c) Involve programme participants: Not only is the decision-making in regard to the resources required in any programme often made by programme staff, but the process of applying for or otherwise securing the desired resources is often carried out by those staff. However, programme staff are there to carry out such work for only a short period, so that the on-going work requires that programme participants acquire the skills necessary for seeking resources as required. A successful programme will therefore involve participants from the very beginning in all aspects of the resource provision process, thus ensuring that the skills relating to such work are well developed.

(d) Ensure that participants exercise control over acquired external resources: No resources are beneficial unless their provision is accompanied by specific efforts to ensure that programme participants are familiar and comfortable with the resources and their utilisation. To some degree this outcome should flow from the above sub-strategies, but the objective of this sub-strategy is to engage in whatever activities are necessary to familiarise participants with the resources being introduced and help them to develop the skills required to utilize effectively and comfortably those resources. Clearly training programmes are one way of achieving these objectives, but delegating responsibility for resource utilisation to programme participants is a further way of ensuring the desired outcome.

Sub-strategies for building external links

(a) Local organization development: The development of local organizations (Strategy 7) is crucial to building external links, in that it is really only through such organizations that a people in poverty can reach out beyond their community borders and be heard.

(b) Poverty alleviation through partnerships: The common strategy in poverty alleviation, at the project level and above, is to build partnerships with local organizations, which is in itself the building of external links for a community from the outside (see Strategy 4).

(c) The role of the mediator: Frequently, lead or other agencies, or staff working within them, are called upon to be the mediator between those in poverty and their external world. This work, through building understanding between parties and paving the way for collaboration, is crucial to building external links for communities in poverty.

(d) Acting as a catalyst within external link agencies: Frequently lead agencies and workers are working with a range of non-governmental and governmental agencies, and so are able to inculcate in them a respect for local organizations and a willingness on their part to link with them.

Strategy 12: Social service provision

It is very clear that rural poverty cannot be alleviated in a sustainable way if those in poverty do not gain access to at least the essential social services. The development and maintenance of people's resources - physical, psychological, social and spiritual - is crucial to their sustainable rise above poverty, so that the social services play a key and direct role in rural poverty alleviation.

So significant is the social services element that successful poverty alleviation at all levels incorporates this element. Even at the community level, it is there. In the first place, the knowledge development that occurs, often at the explicit request of participants, covers many aspects of health care and often literacy skills development. At the comprehensive level, the primacy of social needs, in relation to health, education and housing in particular, is acknowledged from the very beginning by all parties. In this way, rural poverty alleviation almost invariably incorporates an element of social service provision. Secondly, in addition to whatever the poverty alleviation programme is covering in this regard, an objective of almost all programmes is to encourage the existing social service agencies to expand their services to include the poor in their coverage.

Human resource development along social service lines is a key element in poverty alleviation. Moreover, the way that social services are developed can represent a direct contribution to poverty alleviation, but that is the subject of another ESCAP study.

Infrastructure development

What has been said of social service provision is true also of infrastructure development. An adequate infrastructure is crucial to rural poverty alleviation, being especially relevant to the income-generation dimension. Income depends on markets, and markets depend on transport systems; agricultural production may depend on water systems, and various industries on some mode of energy production and distribution; and credit and resource flows and so on may all ultimately depend on the financial market's infrastructure.

Because, therefore, of the importance of infrastructure development, we often see an element of infrastructure development fully integrated within poverty alleviation programmes. Road construction, irrigation systems, appropriate small-scale technology for energy production, the establishment of People's Banks and so on all represent the recognition within rural poverty alleviation of the importance of infrastructure development. They often have the additional value of providing short-term employment for the poor, assuming that money or food is available for that purpose. They also have the potential to build community, in that the engagement of community members on a community infrastructure project is an invaluable tool in community building, thus enhancing the potential for the community to engage in poverty alleviation and its longer-term development.

However, there is only a limited capacity for a poverty-alleviation programme to undertake infrastructure development, and the longer-term and national success of rural poverty alleviation may well depend on whether it is complemented by an adequate infrastructure development programme.
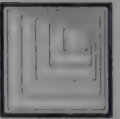
It is important, therefore, that rural poverty alleviation programmes link through to social service provision and infrastructure development in the following ways:

- By engaging in the degree of social service provision and infrastructure development essential to and feasible within the rural poverty alleviation programme being undertaken;
- By encouraging local organizations to understand the need of and press for a greater expansion of social service provision and infrastructure development in their region;
- By encouraging governmental and non-governmental agencies to expand both areas of work within the more poverty-stricken regions; and
- By identifying which specific types and modes of social service provision and infrastructure development are most appropriate to rural poverty alleviation in a particular context, and encouraging developments along those lines.

Rural Poverty Alleviation in Special Contexts

The rural poverty alleviation process presented above suggests that rural poverty alleviation can occur at four levels, with its effectiveness likely to increase with each successive level. An important implication of this aspect of the model is that, to some degree at least, rural poverty alleviation at the community level can occur regardless of the situation prevailing at the wider societal level. Ideally development of any kind is advanced when there are complementary initiatives occurring at the community and societal level, for these two dimensions of development - the so-called bottom-up and top-down levels of development - are both essential to the enhancement of people's well-being at a reasonably satisfactory level.

At the same time, it is clear that the external or societal context can be either basically neutral in relation to rural development or poverty alleviation, in that it neither aids nor handicaps it, or it can be downright negative in its impact. Sometimes a negative impact may be the indirect impact of prevailing development policies. For example, when a country's policies, and consequently resources, are concentrated on urban sector development one common outcome is for a significant number of rural people to migrate to the urban areas. While this can relieve poverty and unemployment in rural areas, it can intensify it by attracting away the younger, better educated, and more extroverted people with more initiative and leadership capacity.

Our concern here, however, is not with situations such as that but ones where the wider societal context is actually or potentially destructive of local development efforts. This can occur where a central government deliberately seeks, for whatever political reason, to keep rural areas subjugated and perhaps poor. In such circumstances, many of the features of rural poverty alleviation will appear to those in power to be subversive. Such features include awareness-raising, social mobilization, local organizational development and even skills enhancement and knowledge building.

The alternative scenario is one where rural areas are not targeted as such, but are nonetheless greatly affected by wider regional or national events or developments. This will occur when a country is ravaged by war, especially these days a prolonged civil war accompanied by a high level of political instability, a relative absence of governance and government services, and regular

fighting throughout the country. This situation denies local development the highly desirable external supports, and places even what is able to be achieved locally in a precarious situation. It may even result in significant numbers of people being displaced from their usual place of residence and requiring to respond to normal needs in a strange environment.

This section acknowledges the existence of these special situations, and raises the possibility of rural poverty alleviation, albeit limited, being not only feasible but essential often to survival and always to well-being. Only one example of a war or post-war situation is presented, suggesting that those special circumstances will have ramifications for the introduction of a rural poverty alleviation. From this example, readers will be able to see how the usual process can be modified to fit special circumstances.

Rural poverty alleviation in a civil war or post-civil war

It is not being suggested that there is a distinctive rural poverty alleviation process in a civil war or post civil war context, but rather that there are a number of modifications to the process outlined above that need to be considered, depending on the prevailing circumstances.

(a) Levels

In most situations it is the community level of rural poverty alleviation which, in these contexts, needs to be emphasized, as often the only level feasible. In some circumstances, some project level work initiated by an external agency may be possible; however, given the precariousness of the overall situation it is crucial that the community level be given prominence. This is not to imply, however, that a catalyst coming in from outside may not be necessary to ensuring the highest possible degree of poverty alleviation at this level.

(b) Principles

While all four principles will be as important here as in any rural poverty alleviation context, the one that may require even stronger endorsement than usual is self-reliance. A civil war context will in most cases greatly reduce a people's ability to rely on external resources or even support, thus throwing communities very much back on locally available resources.

Awareness-raising may also have enhanced importance. In the face of war conditions, people may conclude that working together puts them in danger, that all income-generation activities are useless and so on. On the other hand, a war situation does represent real danger and any tendency to underestimate the extent of the presenting danger may result in naive and potentially disastrous activity. The more potentially precarious a people's situation the more important it is that their level of awareness be appropriate to the situation.

(c) Strategies

Strategy 1: Lead agency

It will often be the case that initiative will need to be taken from outside a local situation to stimulate and enable a people's response to their own poverty. A war situation will render people

in poverty even more apprehensive about initiating action, so that an external stimulus becomes essential. On the other hand, the operations of an external lead agency have the potential of either in reality placing a people in greater jeopardy than usual, or of instilling in people a fear that this could happen and so affecting collaboration.

Therefore both the choice of lead agency and the methods they adopt will be even more crucial than usual. In particular:

- The lead agency should neither have nor be seen to have a political or combatant role in relation to the war situation;
- The agenda should be clearly poverty-related and humanitarian; and
- The approach should be as open as the circumstances permit, thus obviating the possibilities of rumours affecting the work.

Strategies 5 and 6: Staff development

Relating to the above comments under Strategy 1, it is in many cases the staff, as much as or even more than the lead agency as such who will convey to outsiders an impression either of being neutrals in the war context or subversive agents of the one side of the conflict. The selection of staff is thus of crucial importance.

Even when staff are carefully selected they are likely to be placing their lives in some degree of jeopardy, and everything must be done to ensure their protection. As part of this, awareness-raising is important; staff need to have a detailed understanding of the nature of the conflict, and their knowledge and understanding needs to be updated regularly.

The training of staff, particularly in two areas, is vitally important. First they need to be trained to handle all possible situations, whether involving themselves, people with whom they are working, or others. Second, they need to be trained in the exigencies of poverty alleviation in such a context. What can be achieved and how best is it achieved?

Building staff into a team becomes very important in this context. Staff need to work as a team and in sub-teams so designed that they have up-to-date knowledge of each other's location and work. While that is essential for quick protective action, the sub-team is crucial also for providing mutual support and thus giving each other a sense of security.

Strategy 7: Development of local organizations

Community and organizational development are both more necessary and more problematic in a conflict situation. On the one hand, the greater the potential danger, from both the war and its other implications for well-being such as poverty, the more important it is that people should band together for both mutual support and joint action in securing their well-being. On the other hand, in at least some situations it is possible that the very act of people coming together will arouse suspicion and create a type of target effect. How does one handle this dilemma?

There may be no simple answer to this dilemma. In some situations the best answer may be to keep a very low profile and secure the benefits of local organization without conveying to others the impression of any strong organization. In other situations it may be better to adopt a high and
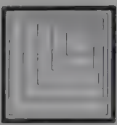
very public profile, while ensuring that the organization's purposes are clear and above board in every sense.

Strategy 10: Income generation

Whether a situation of poverty exists within a context of war or not, it is still poverty and needing to be responded to as such. The ultimate goal of the process is thus the generation of either food and other essentials or of an income which will enable these to be procured. At the same time, however, a war situation will affect strategies which might otherwise be possible. For example, some enterprises will require resources, the availability of which is uncertain; some enterprises will result in products for which a market may no longer exist; and even some food production will require a period of growth or irrigation and so on which render them unviable in the context.

The crux to income-generation in this context is thus planning. Planning is always important but takes on an added importance in a war context. In many cases too the onus here may be on the lead agency, or a partner organised by it, simply because it may require a broader knowledge base than the people possess to determine which forms of income-generation are or are not now viable. Of course all decision-making in this as in other areas needs to be fully participatory.

Ideally it should be advantageous to select crops which can be grown quickly, whether for consumption or sale. Similarly producing goods for the local market may be preferable to providing for a wider market. Also, income-generating enterprises with minimal reliance on external resources of any kind will be preferable to others. Finally, in situations of war it is often women, children and the elderly who remain in the local community in largest numbers, and this may be a factor to be taken into account.

Strategy 12: Social service provision

In extreme situations of conflict, the ability of those who are poor to involve themselves in their own poverty alleviation will be very limited or even negligible. They then have no option but to fall back on the provision of social services, including food aid or income support. Such assistance may, however, be beyond the ability of a government involved in a war to provide, and may even be beyond the desire of a government to provide. In such situations, a people's well-being becomes a responsibility of the international community. While that is a logical conclusion, the extent to which this has occurred in recent years has proved to be a heavy burden on the international community and a relatively precarious source of support for those depending on it. In these circumstances, the importance of emphasising and assisting the highest possible level of self-reliance cannot be stressed too strongly. Unfortunately, for many people a process of rural poverty alleviation as suggested above for the community level may be the only hope.

Resettlement strategies

Resettlement strategies are not usually a component of rural poverty alleviation. Some countries have embarked on internal migration or transmigration programmes, so that resettlement in a new environment becomes a preliminary step in the rural poverty alleviation context. In a war situation, however, the resettlement called for is an outcome of internal displacement. Civil war commonly drives rural people away from their villages and into other regions where they are strangers with limited resources.
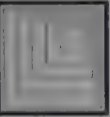
Such situations both require some preliminary steps in the rural poverty alleviation process and result in a somewhat different emphasis on some aspects of the existing process. Without going into this in detail, the following points are indicative of what is required.

- Resettlement of rural people in rural areas requires the provision of land and the other necessary resources to render feasible the process of physical relocation.
- Resettlement presents also a socio-cultural dimension, and a critical initial requirement for successful resettlement is to ensure that provisions are available for an adequate level of socio-cultural resettlement.
- Resettlement following forced flight often results in a disparate group of people with few existing bases of affinity coming together to resettle in a particular place. A crucial early task is to create a sense of community, overcoming in the process if possible any inclinations towards tension between the groups and sub-groups to which the potential members have belonged in the past.
- Frequently a situation of flight and ultimate resettlement involves a transitional phase in a camp or similar situation, during which these internally displaced people are obliged initially to be virtually completely dependent on whichever organizations are responsible for the camp.

Annotated Bibliography

Allen, T. And Thomas, A. (eds). <u>Poverty and Development in the 1990s</u>. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1992.

> This useful general volume of essays on poverty in developing counties was prepared for the Open University in England. It is therefore to some degree in textbook format, but that does not make it less useful to practitioners and managers. The three sections of the text focus on: specific problems, such as diseases of poverty, overpopulation, and environmental degradation and sustainability; significant background factors in "the making of the Third World", such as capitalism and colonialism; and specific issues for development in the 1990s, such as democracy, gender, technology, culture, ethnicity and class.

Brown, L.R., and others. <u>State of the World 1990</u>. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1990.

> This is a Worldwatch Institute Report on Progress Towards a Sustainable Society. It is an annual report with chapters on specific topics of environmental concern. In most cases the chapters are based on meticulous research and are highly regarded as authoritative reviews. Many of the topics covered are relevant to poverty and its alleviation, both directly and indirectly.

Cernea, M.M. (ed). <u>Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development</u> (second edition). New York, Oxford University Press, 1991.

> The first edition of Cernea's book represented the lessons learned from a number of World Bank-assisted development projects. It focused on World Bank experience with sociological work in rural development projects. The success of that edition resulted in the preparation of this second edition, containing chapters on various aspects of rural development (irrigation, settlement, livestock, fishery, forestry, etc), all focusing on the involvement of people and their social organizations. This long and detailed volume is of importance to all rural-based development practitioners and to all who are interested in people-centred development. For those wishing to skip the detail, Cernea's opening chapter and Uphoff's and Chamber's closing chapters are very particularly useful.
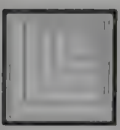
Chambers, R. Rural Development: Putting The Last First. New York, Longman, 1983.
> The focus of this text is on the tendency of common development strategies, and of many outsiders, to fail to appreciate the full reality of rural poverty, and therefore to respond effectively. It presents an integrated model of rural poverty and explores a range of strategies likely to be useful in rural poverty alleviation. It represents essentially a people-centred approach.

Chambers, R. Challenging The Professions: Frontiers For Rural Development. London, Intermediate Technology Publications, 1993.
> The text is concerned with the weaknesses of normal professionalism as an approach to rural development. Chambers outlines why this is so and suggests a range of new, quite radical but very practical alternative approaches. It is an important text for all who are concerned with rural poverty and rural development; as the title implies, it represents a significant challenge to the professions. It is an eminently readable book, highly commended.

Durning, A. "Ending poverty," in Brown, L.R. and others, State of the World 1990. Sydney, Allen & Unwin, 1990.

Ekins, P. A New World Order: Grassroots Movements for Global Change. London, Routledge, 1992.
> The main theme of this book is that future success will result from democratic popular mobilization. The book analyses contemporary problems through a rigorous critique of three major United Nations reports of the 1980s, highlighting the need for new approaches. It then devotes three chapters to some new approaches, all reflecting a non-governmental mobilization approach. The numerous, mainly brief project examples exemplify the contribution of such an approach. While poverty is not a major concern of the text, it is a constant underlying theme and many of the case examples include a poverty alleviation focus.

Elliott, J.A. An Introduction to Sustainable Development: The Developing World. London, Routledge, 1994.
> One of the Routledge "Introductions to Development" series, this book identifies how and why future development patterns and processes must be sustainable on a global scale. It examines the history of the concept of sustainability, and explores the current patterns and future challenges of resource use in rural and urban environments. While essentially an introductory text, it contains much useful material, in the forms of case studies and discussion.

ESCAP. Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region towards the Year 2000 and Beyond. Bangkok, ESCAP, 1992.
> In October 1991, ESCAP's Fourth Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference on Social Development adopted the Manila Declaration on a Social Development Strategy for the ESCAP Region Towards the Year 2000 and Beyond. The Strategy casts the three themes of poverty alleviation, social integration and employment expansion in terms of specific priorities and actions for the ESCAP region. At the top of the Strategy is poverty alleviation, meaning here the eradication of absolute poverty and the reduction of relative

poverty. This is an important document for all concerned with poverty alleviation in the Asia-Pacific region.

ESCAP. Jakarta Plan of Action on Human Resources Development in the ESCAP Region. Revised edition. 1994, New York, United Nations, 1994.

The Jakarta Plan of Action was adopted by ESCAP in 1988 partly because development in the region had often bypassed the majority of the people, intensifying a situation of human redundancy. A basic premise of the Plan is to increase the effective use of the region's human resources. In the light of progress since 1988, and other developments, the Plan was revised in 1994. With its core concept of investing in and utilising human resources in order to enhance quality of life, the Plan has significance for poverty alleviation. It is crucial also as a reflection of official thinking in the Asia Pacific Region.

ESCAP. Strengthening of Regional Cooperation in Human Resources Development in Asia and the Pacific - With Special Reference to the Social Implications of Sustainable Economic Growth. Bangkok, ESCAP, 1995a.

This study was prepared for the fifty-first session of ESCAP in 1995. Apart from building on the conceptual framework of HRD as laid down in the *Jakarta Plan of Action*, the book analyzes four emerging challenges for HRD in the region: trade and investment, institutional developments (such as democratization); demographic and social change; and technological change and the labour market. The book concludes with a set of 20 project proposals for action in various areas of human resources development.

ESCAP. Asian and Pacific Ministerial Conference in Preparation for the World Summit for Social Development. Bangkok, ESCAP, 1995b.

Built on the Social Development Strategy, the above Conference, held in October 1994, adopted the Manila Declaration on the *Agenda for Action on Social Development in the ESCAP Region*. The Agenda addresses the three core issues of the World Summit for Social Development, namely poverty alleviation, social integration, and employment expansion. It identifies a number of specific, time-bound regional social development goals and targets, reinforcing and building on existing international agreements and standards.

Esman, M.J. and Uphoff, N.T. Local Organizations: Intermediaries in Rural Development. Ithaca, Cornell University Press, 1984.

This volume focuses on various facets of the roles which local organizations can and do play in rural development. The work is based on the examination of 150 rural local organizations, ranging from the most to the least successful, and details the lessons to be learned from this examination. The book reflects the careful research on which it was based and therefore is heavy reading. On the other hand, its importance flows from its scientific approach. The book essentially argues that rural people must be involved in managing their own affairs and participating in activities affecting their quality of life. Such participation requires effective local organizations, and the major contribution of this book is to enable us to understand what constitutes such organizations.

Korten, D.C. Getting to the 21st Century: Voluntary Action and the Global Agenda. West Hartford Conn., Kumarian Press, 1990.

This publication incorporates a discussion of poverty and its alleviation within a broader discussion of trends in development in the 1980s, highlighting the deficiencies in vision,
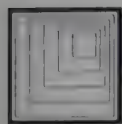
strategies and outcomes. This analysis forms the basis for his blueprint for the 1990s and the twenty-first century. An informed critic of many trends in development, the focus of his vision for the future is people-centred, and therefore on the roles of voluntary action and of the organizations which people form. He examines the central role of voluntary action in creating social and institutional change in an eminently readable and insightful text.

Mullen, J. (ed). Rural Poverty Alleviation. Aldershot Harts, Avebury, 1995.

For those who are interested in rural poverty alleviation this volume is rather disappointing. It is a collection of chapters prepared mainly by English-based academics. While each chapter is of some value as a contribution, the volume *in toto* does not manage to convey the field as comprehensively as one would wish. It represents a series of papers brought together at a particular symposium rather than papers commissioned to constitute a balanced volume on rural poverty alleviation. Nonetheless, it contains considerable material of merit.

South Asian Association for Regional Cooperation (SAARC). Report of the Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation. Kathmandu, SAARC, 1992.

In 1991 the SAARC member Governments agreed upon the urgent need for a major thrust towards poverty alleviation in their region of South Asia. Despite various successful programmes, it was recognized that no significant progress was being made in alleviating the problem of poverty. The Independent South Asian Commission on Poverty Alleviation was therefore established, and it reported back to the parent body in 1992. The report analyses the problem of poverty and related factors, critiques past interventions, emphasizes the importance of involving the people themselves in the process (including through social mobilization) and presents a range of new poverty alleviation strategies. It is informative and stimulating reading.

United Nations, Report of the World Summit for Social Development, New York, United Nations, 1995.

The World Summit on Social Development was the first major international meeting in this field. While the Report is a carefully crafted document designed to win the support of a wide range of State systems. It is a significant document in terms of the extent of agreement it represents and the degree of influence it is likely to carry. While the entire document is relevant to poverty alleviation, the fact that the second of the ten commitments agreed upon at the Summit is the eradication of poverty is particularly important. The report sets out also a series of steps by which it believes poverty can be eradicated, with one of five chapters devoted exclusively to that topic. This is a very important document for all who are concerned about poverty.

United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 1994. New York, Oxford University Press, 1993.

UNDP initiated its series of annual Human Development Reports in 1990. Each volume examines a global development issue, adopting a people-centred view. The 1993 report focuses on people's participation, with its final chapter devoted to community organizations. It documents and stresses the importance of people's involvement in their own development and the roles of people's organizations and non-governmental organizations.

United Nations Development Programme. Human Development Report 1995. New York, Oxford University Press, 1995.

> The 1995 Human Development report focuses on gender issues in the development context. It explores the grossly unequal situation of women and the realities of discrimination against them. It is a sensitive, well-documented and unbiased presentation of a topic of critical importance to all development and poverty alleviation work.

Uphoff, N. (1991). "Fitting Projects to People," in Cernea, M.M. (ed) Putting People First: Sociological Variables in Rural Development. New York, Oxford University Press.

Uphoff, N. Local Institutional Development: An Analytical Sourcebook With Cases. West Hartford Conn., Kumarian Press, 1986.

> Uphoff shares with others the conviction that local institutions - those closest to intended beneficiaries - have for a long time been neglected, their potential to contribute significantly to all development ignored. His study is a very detailed analysis of actual situations, drawn from Africa, Asia and Latin America. The case studies are grouped according to their tasks - natural resource management, rural infrastructure, primary health care, agriculture and non-agricultural enterprise. The focus is on identifying strategies which are most effective in supporting local institutional development. This meticulous and academic study provides many insights into an important aspect of rural-based development.

World Bank. World Development Report 1990: Poverty. New York, Oxford University Press, 1990.

> Each year the World Bank publishes a World Development Report. While the second half of the publication is always a Statistical Appendix presenting country-specific data on development, the first half takes the form of a usually comprehensive, insightful, factual and action-oriented paper on a specific topic. In 1990 the topic was poverty. The paper discusses the dimensions and nature of poverty and includes chapters on several strategies for its alleviation, including economic, social service and safety net strategies. The report represents a useful overview of poverty in developing countries.

World Commission on Environment and Development. Our Common Future. Oxford, Oxford University Press, 1987.

> WCED was asked by the General Assembly on the United Nations to formulate "a global agenda for change" which would achieve sustainable development by the year 2000. The report focuses on the links between poverty, inequality and environmental degradation. It examines the challenges facing the modern world in such areas as population, food security, ecosystems, energy and the urban challenge. It ends with a series of proposals for institutional and legal change. This report represents one of the most comprehensive and independent analyses of the contemporary development situation from an environmentalist perspective.

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